University of Alberta

Brown Men/White Women: Race and the Sexual Politics of Decolonization

by

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Abstract

My dissertation investigates representations of interracial desire in South Asian British diasporic literature and film and in neo-imperial narratives of the 'war on terror'. Drawing upon theoretical insights from anti-racist feminism, decolonization and black British cultural studies, I develop a methodology for analyzing how masculinity and femininity are racially and sexually coded through images of this interracial couple, and how these images mediate discourses of identity and belonging at the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and class.

The first three chapters examine how this interracial couple functions as a motif through which South Asian masculinity is re-imagined against the British colonial stereotype of the 'dark rapist', and in the context of contemporary racism in Britain. Chapter One argues that representations of interracial desire in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* draw attention to sexism and interracial homosocial fear and desire in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*. Kureishi's novel articulates many of the complexities and ambivalences of interracial desire, and it celebrates Fanon's insights while critiquing the limits of his work for the project of psychic decolonization in the South Asian diaspora.

Chapter Two argues that Udayan Prasad's *Brothers in Trouble*, a film adaptation of Abdullah Hussein's novella "The Journey Back," reveals the regulative economy through which white women function as fetish-objects for Pakistani male migrants in Britain as the men strive to gain 'masculine certainty' in their new location. Chapter Three reads interraciality in Ayub Khan-Din's film *East is East* as a motif that enables a simultaneous critique of the liberal British

state's logic of national and racial purity and British Islamic notions of religious and cultural purity.

Chapter Four analyzes how the figure of white femininity and the image of the 'dark rapist' evoke colonial memory and justify neo-imperial violence in media narratives of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. I focus on representations of three white female soldiers, including Jessica Lynch and Lynndie England, to demonstrate how the media rouse deeply established fears of the racial other, expertly manipulating the intersectionalities of race, gender, sexuality and class whilst simultaneously reproducing these ambivalent categories as discrete and stable.

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For Frances

And for those who struggle

towards decolonizing minds, hearts,

and bodies

everywhere

Preface

Constructions of white femininity and brown masculinity are adapted for different audiences at different times and in different locations through images of the interracial couple: brown man/white woman. In this project I examine how contemporary images of this interracial couple, which are deeply imbued with meanings produced in British colonial discourse, create new meanings in post-colonial and neo-imperial contexts. In particular, I analyze how interraciality functions in two distinct but intricately related fields of discourse to construct different meanings about brown masculinity and white femininity. Part I of the dissertation involves the study of the construction of brown masculinity through the motif of interraciality in literature and film produced by and about men who identify as part of the South Asian British diaspora. In Part II I shift my focus to an analysis of the deployment of the figure of white femininity and the motif of interracial rape in media narratives of the U.S./UK invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The main threads connecting the shift in analytical focus between Parts I and II are, firstly, the image of the interracial couple, and secondly, the methodology I develop throughout the dissertation. This methodology involves reading the ways different constructions of masculinity and femininity are racially and sexually coded through images of the interracial couple, how these different constructions are interconnected, and how they work to articulate powerful messages about difference. A brief description of how I came to this project, and the political and theoretical objectives that compelled me to bring these fields of discourse together, will help to clarify what I perceive as the crucial links between

them, and how I imagine this work fitting into the much larger project of decolonization.

The roots of my project lie in my Master's thesis, which analyzed the image of this interracial couple in the *fin-de-siécle* romance novels of Anglo-Indian 'New Woman' writer Victoria Cross.[1] I argued that Cross's representations of the British 'New Woman' as socially and sexually transgressive relied heavily on her deployment of the stereotype of the Indian man as 'dark rapist' of white British women, a stereotype that began to appear in British colonial discourse shortly after the Indian Uprising of 1857.[2] Taking my cue from Gayatri Spivak's analysis of Jane Eyre in "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," I applied colonial discourse analysis to images of the 'dark rapist' and the interracial couple in Cross's work. My hope was to contribute to the development of an anti-racist feminist literary analysis that critically responds to the growing popularity of the recuperative methods of late-twentieth-century feminist literary criticism. This recuperative practice tends to valorize white women writers of the past as feminist forerunners without taking into account the racist colonial context that informed both the production of this writing and its reception in both the past and present.

The process of writing my Master's thesis firmly established, for me, the extent to which, as a white feminist literary scholar, my own academic and

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[1] "*Dangerous Crossings: Victorian Feminism, Imperialist Discourse, and Victoria Cross's 'New Woman' in Indigenous Space.*" Presented to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Guelph. April 1999.

[2] See my Introduction and Chapter 4 for a more detailed description of Jenny Sharpe's discussion of the emergence of the figure of the Indian man as 'dark rapist' of white British women in British colonial discourse.

political roots, as well as my subjectivity, are deeply informed by and implicated in the colonial past, the neo-imperial present, and the discursive practices that delineate racial, sexual and gender difference. The current project was initially driven by my desire to continue the work of anti-racist feminism in the fields of literary and cultural studies. And I felt that my study of late nineteenth-century British narratives had only begun to scratch the surface of how representations of white femininity are integral to the construction of brown masculinity and the stereotype of the dark rapist. Intrigued by a suggestion from an examiner during my Master's thesis defense to investigate how Indian writers may be responding to the colonial discourse of interraciality and the stereotype of the Indian man as dark rapist, I began searching for texts that engage with this couple and somehow counter or alter this stereotype of brown masculinity. I soon found that the film and literature of the South Asian diaspora presents a wide range of representations of the interracial couple. In these texts the interracial couple functions as a motif through which South Asian masculinity is re-imagined against the discourse of the colonial past and refigured in relation to the complexities of living as a brown man in contemporary racist Britain. My work in this area brought new challenges in terms of anti-racist feminist practice, as these texts often recreate patriarchal and heteronormative power relations in their attempt to 'unfix' colonial and neo-imperial stereotypes of South Asian men and establish their authority in a post-colonial context.

Early on in my PhD work the events of 9-11 took place. And as the rhetoric of George Bush's 'war on terror' took over the airwaves, and the figure of

the 'Islamic terrorist' became ubiquitous, Islamophobia intensified in North America and Europe. As the U.S. and UK began bombing and invading Afghanistan, and then Iraq, and governments imprisoned hundreds of men of South Asian and Middle-Eastern descent in Canada, the U.S., Europe and Cuba, I realized that my own work could be useful in the analysis of the racist narratives that justify the new neo-imperialist agenda of the U.S. and its 'coalition of the willing.' But I was as yet unclear about how I could contribute to this politically urgent project.

Then, on 9 April 2003, during a trip to the university library, I was sidelined by a photograph in *The Globe and Mail*. This photograph, and the accompanying article, elucidated for me how my study of the construction of white femininity and brown masculinity in South Asian British literature and film was connected to the current political context, and how the work I was presently engaged in could contribute to a critique of the current rhetoric of imperialism. The newspaper lay open on a table, and a black and white photograph showed a young female British soldier in full combat gear, including a rifle and a helmet that does not fully hide her long blond hair. The soldier is smiling flirtatiously at a young dark-skinned man handing her a flower, and they are surrounded by other brown-skinned men, who watch with what look like mildly bemused, confused and smirking faces. The caption read: "An Iraqi man thanks a British soldier patrolling Basra yesterday: 'The UN's sordid record on Iraq may be deplorable, but it is not unique'" (Scheunemann A13).

This image of a white woman with a brown man in Eastern[3] space resonated deeply for me because it brought me immediately back to my Master's work, with its focus on the interracial couple and the stereotype of the dark rapist in colonial discourse about India. The photograph of the white female soldier and the Iraqi man in Basra is deeply imbued with meaning in colonial discourse about South Asia, since the conflation of all brown men into one racial and religious group continues to operate through the reiteration of Orientalist discourse and the racial stereotypes it produces. While earlier European and American imperial conquests changed the geo-political and economic structure of the world throughout the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, and continue to benefit many middle- and upper-class people living in the richest countries in the world, the mainstream news media expertly avoid making explicit connections between the current invasion and the West's imperial history. Yet, while they do nothing to remedy this historical 'forgetting', they exploit the images and metaphors of older colonial narratives to remind us of our supposed intellectual, moral, racial and cultural superiority over the East, especially when there is a fresh need to justify the military presence of a Western power in a newly-invaded Eastern region. The

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[3]Following Edward Said's concept of Orientalism as a European academic tradition that denotes "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (Said, *Orientalism* 2-3), I understand 'the East' and 'the West' as a discursively produced binary system that serves as a method of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the politics, people and resources of the geographical location defined as 'the Orient' or 'the East'. For Said, late twentieth-century American Orientalism differs from earlier forms produced by Britain and France largely because the U.S. never had colonies in 'the Orient', so there is no archive of "actual experiences" from which they draw their images of 'the East.' The threatening and demonized figure of the Islamic terrorist is at the heart of how this new American Orientalism operates, and this figure has been emphasized as representative of 'the East' by journalists and Hollywood from the 1970s on (Sut Jhally, *On Orientalism*). Since 9-11, American Orientalist discourse about the Islamic terrorist dominates in Europe, North America and other countries considered part of 'the West', where Anti-Arab racism is rapidly spreading.

effectiveness of this particular image of a white woman and a brown man in news coverage of the invasion of Iraq is due to the fact that the rich discursive history of Western imperialism remains invisible to a white Western public lacking general knowledge of earlier imperial invasions and colonial occupations while the stereotypes that justify them remain at the forefront of the public's imagination.

As I argue in detail in Chapter 4, *The Globe and Mail* article uses the image of a white female soldier to symbolize Western benevolence and the success of democracy, supporting the myth that women in the West have been fully liberated from their own brand of patriarchal oppression. It thus gives validity to the logical contradiction, and lie, that the U.S. and UK invasion is actually liberation. At the same time, and on another level of signification, the image of a white woman in Eastern space resonates deeply with colonial narratives of white female virtue, and with white women's vulnerability in the face of the threat of sexual violence by rebellious natives. Though the colonial stereotype of the dark rapist is contained within the discourse of liberation that the article promotes, it is nevertheless suggested through allusion to romantic desire between the white female soldier and the Iraqi man handing her a flower, and by the image of this woman surrounded by other Iraqi men watching this exchange.

For me, the fact that this photograph was employed as a means of justifying the invasion of Iraq demonstrates the necessity of developing a clearer understanding of the role nineteenth-century colonial discourse plays in representations of brown masculinity and white femininity in the current 'war on

terror'. And it suggests the importance of engaging with texts, like those of the South Asian British diaspora, that represent alternative images to that of brown men as Islamic terrorists. And as I stress in the following pages, it is equally important to continue the development of an anti-racist feminist practice that simultaneously critiques the reassertion of heteronormative patriarchy, however and wherever it is presented, as a method of resisting Western imperialism and white dominance throughout the globe.

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Introduction

Decoding Racial Domination and Female Subordination: Anti-Racist Feminism and Decolonization

> Even one example of a rebellion that is not sexually coded should remind us that the fearful image of the dark-skinned rapist is not an essential condition of the colonial psyche but contingent upon its discursive production. (Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire* 3)

> . . . the construction of white femininity–that is, the different ideas about what it means to be a white female–can play a pivotal role in negotiating and maintaining concepts of racial and cultural difference. (Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* 4)

> If a black and white couple is screwing, it involves color, class, and relations between the sexes. Human relations are meeting points for a whole complex of social arrangements, and that's why I like to write about them. (Hanif Kureishi, "Interview with Marcia Pally" 53)

White Femininity and Brown Masculinity in Colonial Discourse: The Stereotype of the Dark Rapist

This project is both indebted to and crucially informed by the work of scholars who study the intersections of race and gender in a range of colonial narratives, from news media to novels, drama and fiction. Much of the scholarship on the colonial history of the interracial couple focuses on the intersecting constructions of racialized masculinity and femininity articulated through the stereotype of the dark rapist and the accompanying image of the virtuous and vulnerable white woman. While some early commentators on the stereotype of the dark rapist contend that this figure is a result of projections of the white unconscious onto racial others,[1] the majority of recent theorizing about

[1]In Patrick Brantlinger's account of the appearance of the threat of the dark rapist in colonial discourse he elaborates on O. Mannoni's formulation of the 'Prospero complex,' which suggests that the figure of the dark rapist is a projection of the white unconscious, a figure that

representations of interraciality shifts the focus onto the ways both black and white subjectivities are produced through discourses and practices of racial othering. In "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," bell hooks argues that fantasies and longings about contact with the other are embedded in the deep structure of our "white supremacist capitalist patriarchal culture," and that desires for the 'primitive' or fantasies of the other are continuously exploited in a manner that reinscribes and maintains this status quo (22). In *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity and Victorian Culture*, Jennifer DeVere Brody provides a detailed examination of how fantasies and longings of the racial other were produced in a wide-range of nineteenth-century British cultural texts. Brody argues that binary categories such as race and gender, human and animal, tame and wild, hybrid and pure are not conflicting categories, but are "mutually constitutive"; they not only cannot exist without each other, but they must also be continuously reinscribed through representation in order to maintain the fiction of their status as opposites. Her analysis demonstrates how representations of the "miscegenated coupling" of black women and white men was utilized to construct Englishness as 'masculine,' 'white' and 'pure' (11-12).

Brody contends that binary categories of identity are constructed as a way of allaying anxieties of sameness, and she reads the dominant sexual theories of

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reflects the European's own "savage sexuality" (Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* 210; O. Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonisation* 110-111). Jenny Sharpe argues very convincingly that the characterizing of these stories as projections of a white colonial unconscious "does no less than provide an alibi for the organized violence that enabled a European minority to rule millions of natives in their own country" (*Allegories of Empire* 4).

the Victorian era as the ideological underpinning for the justification of white male power over both black and white women. These sexual theories, she asserts, held that the miscegenated coupling of black women and white men was fecund, physically possible and in some cases desirable for economic gain; it allowed the rape of black women by white men as a means of increasing the slave population. However, the miscegenated coupling of black men and white women was considered both sterile and physically impossible, a concept that permitted white men to maintain the fantasy that white women not only *would not*, but more importantly, *could not* procreate with black men, a coupling that could result in destabilizing the white man's unstable power of paternity (Brody 8). In *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History*, Vron Ware traces a tradition of feminist inquiry into the intersections of racial domination and female subordination, arguing, like Brody, that racism is a practice that involves not only the oppression of all blacks, but also the subordination of white women. Ware attributes the first public articulation of the intersections of racial domination and female subordination to black anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells, who argued that the discourse of Southern chivalry, which constructed white women as sexually inaccessible and virtuous, was a practice through which white men legitimized their authority over both white women and the black population of the Southern U.S. (Ware, Chapter 4).

In *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*, Jenny Sharpe argues that a similar discourse of white male chivalry operated in colonial

India to justify British imperialist violence and white patriarchal authority by constructing Indian men who rebelled against colonial rule as rapists of white women. The precursor to this stereotype was that of the "mild Hindoo" who must be taught to resist Eastern despotism by the European colonizers (Sharpe 58). And as Mrinalini Sinha's work in *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* suggests, the 'manliness' of the British was also constructed, in part, through the image of the elite Bengali man as effeminate. Sharpe demonstrates how, both during and long after the Indian Uprising of 1857, the figure of white femininity functioned to construct Indian men, particularly Muslims, as rapists of English 'ladies'. Narratives of interracial rape, which cast English men as the rescuers and avengers of defenseless white women, helped justify the British military's 'campaign of terror' against the Indian population during the uprisings by providing "a 'reasonable' explanation [for British violence] within the logic of the civilizing mission" (Sharpe 6). Acknowledging the complexities of complicity and resistance for white women during colonialism, Sharpe contends that while the moral value of white womanhood promoted through the discourse of chivalry operated to subordinate white women to white men, it was also appropriated by white women to gain agency within white heteropatriarchy.[2] Searching for a

[2]The term 'white heteropatriarchy' is drawn from Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York, 1993) by Jennifer De Vere Brody in her description of the challenge made by white anti-racist feminists who call for white women "to give up their white womanhood" in order to simultaneously challenge racism, heteronormativity and patriarchy (Brody, "Rereading Race and Gender: When White Women Matter," *American Quarterly* 48.1 (1996): 153-160.

critical model to analyze white women's negotiation for power in light of their position within gender and racial hierarchies, Sharpe strives to "[dismantle] the victim/villain opposition," arguing that the figure of the "domestic woman is not the source of female agency nor the passive repository of the domestic ideal," but rather a "precarious and unstable subjectivity" that exists at the intersection of agency and passivity (11-12).[3] The construction of white femininity in colonial discourse required the "English women's bid for gender power [to pass] through a colonial hierarchy of race," and the sediments of this colonial past can be found in contemporary theories of female agency (Sharpe 12).

As I indicate in my Preface, and flesh out in much more detail in Chapter Four (Part II), the image of the dark rapist and the vulnerable white woman have been invigorated in neo-colonial narratives. And while the image of the dark rapist is evoked to manage the crisis of control over 'rebellious natives' in Iraq, it simultaneously reinforces gender inequality and counters feminist demands for equal rights at home. Understanding patterns of racial domination and female subordination as they are adapted through time is a crucial component for identifying the similarities and connections between what Ware (citing Jane Flax) articulates as the "'dynamic and disorderly, yet systematic' constructions of black and white masculinity and femininity" in the present. And the interconnections between black and white masculinity and femininity are, Ware argues,

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[3] For other excellent analyzes of white women's role in historical imperialisms and the relationship between constructions of white womanhood and discourses of empire see: Strobel (1991 and 1993); Chaudhuri and Strobel (1992); Sinha (1992); Lewis (1996) Jayawardena (1995); David (1995); Melman (1992); Grewal (1996).

"particularly visible in the construction of the vulnerable white woman threatened by the predatory black man, a couplet that can be traced throughout the history of white supremacy," and is present in contemporary British popular culture ("Purity and Danger" 138).

In "Purity and Danger: Race, Gender and Tales of Sex Tourism," Ware investigates the intersecting practices of racial domination and female subordination in British tabloid accounts of sex tourism involving white British women in West Africa. She reveals how the long histories of racial slavery and colonialism are brought to bear on these contemporary accounts of interracial desire, demonstrating how constructions of white femininity and black masculinity are adapted for a contemporary British audience (136). As Ware points out, it is crucial to analyze contemporary images of white femininity and black masculinity in the context of racial slavery, since it was a system of domination that was fundamental to the project of imperialism. But it is also important to recognize how the historical memory of racial slavery in Britain "has been transformed by nearly two hundred years of colonialism" (136). Recognizing the links between the histories of racial slavery and colonialism helps us to devise a methodology that takes into account the fact that, as Ware contends, "the white supremacist imagination is . . . capable of a very limited repertoire" (138). At the same time, however, awareness of the differences between the histories of racial slavery and colonialism facilitates a deeper understanding of how South Asians have been conflated with other 'blacks' and distinguished from them through racist meanings derived not only from constructions of their race and sexuality, but also

from constructions of their religion. For as Ware, following Said, points out, Orientalist discourses have produced images of the East as exotic, passive, irrational, unfathomable and threatening to the West, and have, like all racist discourses, constituted Eastern femininity and masculinity in relation to ideas about white femininity and masculinity ("Purity and Danger" 137).

While taking into account the connected but different histories of racial slavery and colonialism, I analyze, in Part I, South Asian British narratives that engage with images of interracial desire between brown men and white women. My analysis of these texts is an attempt to increase our understanding of the intersections of racial domination and female subordination from the perspective of those cast as 'dark rapists' in British colonial discourse, and who identify as, or are often read as, Muslim, a constituency "increasingly formulated as the most dangerous and least assimilable of minorities, Europe's most terrifying and volatile other" (Desai 68). As a common motif in British South Asian diasporic literature and film, representations of interracial desire between South Asian British men and white British women serve ostensibly different purposes than they do in discourses of colonialism and white supremacy, but there are also important links to be made in terms of their function in each of these discursive realms.

As Isaac Julien argues in the context of queer interracial desire, desire across racial lines has the ability to "[undermine] the binary notions of self/other, black/white, straight/queer," but it also functions as an "axis along which different forms of cultural policing take place" in both black and white cultural spheres

("Black Is, Black Ain't 75). And while images of mutual desire between brown men and white women in South Asian British texts challenge the colonial stereotype of the dark rapist, they also often reveal the persistence of female subordination and heteronormativity in the project of decolonization. As Kobena Mercer contends, homophobia and sexism constitute "the interior limits of decolonization," and although they are often "repressed" and "unspoken in black liberation narratives," they reveal themselves in the form of "symptom" (Mercer, "Decolonisation" 121-22).

In the three chapters that constitute Part I, I explore the various ways interracial desire is employed in the construction of complex images of South Asian masculinity, paying careful attention to the interior limits of decolonization, which appear as symptoms of sexism and homophobia in some of these narratives, but are consciously critiqued in others. I have selected texts that represent interracial desire in the context of contemporary British racial and sexual politics, and my focus is on how South Asian British men's bid for masculine power passes through a hierarchy of gender in these texts. This section links the anti-racist feminist challenge waged against white heteropatriarchy to a comprehensive decolonization movement that confronts black liberationist narratives that reinforce sexism and homophobia in their struggle against racism. Both anti-racist feminism and a decolonization movement hoping to rid itself of its interior limits share a recognition of how oppressive regimes discriminate on multiple grounds simultaneously; they are both committed to exposing, confronting and abolishing the intertwined practices

of racism, sexism and homophobia.

Contemporary Contexts: 'New Racism' and Resistance in Britain

Some of they key theoretical insights emerging in debates in black representation in Britain in the late twentieth-century arose in the context of the political climate created by the 'new racism' in Britain in the latter half of the twentieth-century. This climate crucially informs the contextual backdrop of the South Asian British literature and film under study in Part I. The 'new racism' and the debates that arose in its wake also constitute crucial background for my analysis, in Part II, of neo-colonial constructions of white femininity, the motif of interracial rape, and accounts of Arab/Muslim hypermasculinity in media narratives of the U.S./UK invasion of Iraq in 2003.[4]

In his extensive analysis of the cultural politics of race and nation in post-WWII Britain, Paul Gilroy contends that the principal mechanism through which racism operates in Britain is an oscillation between the idea that blacks[5] comprise a 'problem', and the equally pernicious idea that blacks are "forever

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[4]See Chapter Four for my analysis of how the figure of the hypermasculine Arab man is connected to the stereotype of the dark rapist in colonial texts, and for an explanation of my use of the terms Arab and Muslim in reference to neo-colonial discourse. (p 184, fn 3)

[5]As Paul Gilroy notes, in the new racism in Britain "the word 'immigrant' became synonymous with the word 'black'" (*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* 46). Anti-racist organizers also adopted the term 'black' to articulate a political–rather than biological–category of identification. This category included large and diverse minority communities of South Asian, African and Caribbean descent. The term black is now used in Britain to signify those of African descent, while those of South Asian descent are often referred to as British Asian, British South Asian, South Asian British or Asian British. Since the term Asian usually signifies those of East Asian descent in North America, I use the term South Asian British to maintain a distinction between those of South Asian and East Asian descent in Britain.

victims, objects rather than subjects," who remain incapable of thinking or acting in their own interests (*There Ain't No Black In The Union Jack* 11). This mechanism ensures that 'race' is kept outside of history, and within the category of natural and inevitable events. While the "capacity to evacuate any historical dimension to black life remains a fundamental achievement of racist ideologies" in Britain, these discourses remain convincing only insofar as the past is repressed and denied (11). Countering the "alternating current of racism between problem and victim status" requires the representation of a black presence in Britain outside of these categories, and Gilroy thus proposes the "reintroduction of history" as a method of challenging racist reasoning at its core (11-12).

While older forms of British racism were anchored in imperial expansion overseas, a contemporary form, dubbed 'the new racism', emerged in post-war Britain as a way to make sense of national decline (Gilroy 29, 40). The 'new racism' arose on the domestic front soon after the end of World War II and Britain's loss of India in 1948, until then the Empire's most lucrative possession. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Britain recruited laborers from countries it had previously colonized. Postcards, brochures and posters advertising Britain as a promised land invited people from South Asia, the Caribbean and Africa to Britain as workers (Kapo 54). But when new immigrants arrived they were expected to work for extremely low wages, and replaced poor whites on the lowest rung of the socio-economic scale (Kapo 55).

By the 1960s, due to the general decline of its industrial bases, Britain

faced an economic crisis that transformed urban (especially inner-urban) economies. The decline in production resulted in a whole range of social and economic problems, specifically in the areas of "race relations, unemployment, housing, education, social services and community development" (Jacobs 16). It was during this time, argues Gilroy, that the 'new racism' emerged to render the economic decline of the British nation intelligible by linking "discourses of patriotism, nationalism, xenophobia, Englishness, Britishness, militarism and gender difference," which "combine to provide a definition of 'race' in terms of culture and identity" (43). These contemporary practices of racism are enacted through the language of both popular and official racisms, which construct Britishness and blackness as mutually exclusive political categories (Gilroy 195). This form of racism, writes Gilroy, "is primarily concerned with mechanisms of community and simultaneously advances reasons for the segregation or banishment of those whose 'origin, sentiment or citizenship' assigns them elsewhere" (45).

Part of constructing Britishness and blackness as mutually exclusive political categories involved defining black people as 'different' rather than 'inferior'. Writing of the rhetoric of the new racism vocalized most prominently by Conservative Party politician Enoch Powell, Amy Ansell notes that this 'difference' was expressed most readily in terms of culture rather than biology[6]:

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[6]This view of non-whites as 'different' rather than 'inferior' is echoed in Samuel Huntington's article "The Clash of Civilizations," first published in 1993. The article, which sparked global controversy, argued that the defeat of communism had ended ideological disputes between nations, and that now culture, not politics or economics, would divide the world. I briefly discuss

> Black people were said to possess a different 'way of life'. It was a difference, moreover, which was deemed incompatible with the 'British way of life', and indeed destructive. Black people were constructed as others; as in but not of the nation. They could never truly belong, even those black people born in Britain, since Britishness, for Powell, had less to do with geography than a set of unspoken inherited cultural characteristics that could not simply be adopted. (144)

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Powell became infamous for his repatriation campaign, which he called "re-emigration" and promoted in his famous 'Rivers of Blood' speech (Powell 2). In this address, delivered in Birmingham in April 1968, Powell characterized the commonwealth immigrant population as a rising threat to "ordinary, decent, sensible people" (4), and argued that although stopping the flow of the "alien element" entering the country was a step that must be taken, it would not be enough to change "the basic character of [this] national danger" (2). Only by extraditing "[c]ommonwealth immigrants and their descendants" from British soil, he argued, could the problem be adequately tackled (2).[7]

Gilroy's characterization of the 'new racism' differs from Ansell's. He contends that biology is not absent from the concept of culture in the discourse

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Huntington's article in chapter three as ideological background to the discourse of "implacable antagonisms" that underwrites current narratives of the encounter between Muslims in the diaspora and 'the West'.

[7]Powell outlined a policy that would encourage re-emigration by offering "generous assistance" for those wishing to return "to their countries of origin or to go to other countries anxious to receive the manpower and the skills they represent" (2). While Powell's own rhetoric overflows with images of "a persecuted [white] minority" being increasingly victimized by hordes of thankless (black) immigrants, he suggests that the refusal of Commonwealth immigrants to "integrate," i.e., "to become for all practical purposes indistinguishable from [England's] other members," is the root of the problem, since when they arrived there was, according to Powell, "no discrimination between one citizen and another" (3). As Salman Rushdie pointed out in 1982, although over forty per cent of blacks in Britain at that time had been born and bred in Britain, the racist discourse of inclusion and exclusion continued to flourish through continuous referral to all blacks as 'immigrants,' and "as people whose real 'home' is elsewhere" (Rushdie, "The New Empire Within Britain" 132).

of the 'new racism'. Instead, he suggests, the British nation is represented in terms "which are simultaneously biological and cultural" through phrases like 'the Island Race' and 'the Bulldog Breed'. And he points to the Immigration Act of 1968 as a law that codified the "cultural biology of 'race'" as part of the strategy to exclude black settlers from belonging to the nation: "This act specified that immigration controls would not apply to any would-be settler who could claim national membership on the basis that one of their grandparents had been born in the UK. The Nationality Act of 1981 rationalized the legal vocabulary involved so that patrials are now known as British citizens" (45). Gilroy also draws an important distinction between how West Indian and South Asian populations were differently constructed as outsiders. While West Indians were considered "a bastard people occupying an indeterminate space between the Britishness which is their colonial legacy and an amorphous, ahistorical relationship with the dark continent," South Asians, regardless of their national origin, were understood to be "bound by cultural and biological ties" that made them "a cohesive rival nation" to the British (45-46). In Powell's speeches he used the language of war and invasion to suggest that the South Asian population represented a clear threat to British national boundaries (Gilroy 45), and his 'Rivers of Blood' speech draws attention to the Sikh communities' desire to maintain religious customs as proof of his argument that "the greater part of the immigrant population . . . never conceived or intended" to integrate into English culture (Powell 5).

Fear of miscegenation is another central feature of the new racism, and "both the police and the organized racist groups of the time felt that the

association of white women with black men . . . degraded Britain as a whole" (Gilroy 162). Interracial relationships between black men and white women were seen as a threat to the 'purity' and cohesiveness of the white British nation. As in the colonial context, miscegenation signaled the "descent of white womanhood," and in Britain it also acted as a signifier of the social problems caused by black settlement (Gilroy 80). As extreme racist groups, including such organizations as the British Ku Klux Klan and the National Front, gained in force throughout the 1960s, they carried out street level harassment of blacks, and black men living with white women constituted a prime target for their violent attacks (Gilroy 118).

In the 1970s interracial couples were increasingly targeted as police patrols and groups of racists would wait outside dance clubs frequented by black men and white women at closing time "to assault and intimidate any black man they could find with a white woman" (Gilroy 162). Thus, crossing racial boundaries sexually carried with it a pronounced threat of violence against both black men and white women. Instead of arresting the white men who attacked interracial couples, the police often arrested the black men who had been attacked by racists. When the white women whose black boyfriends were being arrested started attacking the police in protest, they were arrested along with them (Gilroy 162). As Ras Makonnen (George Griffith) suggests, the formation of political alliances across racial lines was premised on a shared struggle against a system that discriminated against both blacks and women:

> We [black political activists] recognised that the dedication of some of the [white] girls to our cause was an expression of equal rights for women. One way of rejecting the oppression of [white] men was to associate with

> blacks. To walk with a negro into a posh club like the Atheneum was to make this point. But many of them were vigorously attacked for this. (Makonnen qtd in Gilroy 163)

Forming political alliances across racial lines was also a main feature of the anti-racist movement of the late 1970s. And anti-racist organizations like Rock Against Racism (RAR) grounded their activist strategies in the idea that racial and class oppression are intricately connected, and that both must be fought simultaneously. Gilroy outlines the ideological groundings and activist strategies of self-declared anti-racist organizations such as RAR and the Anti Nazi League (ANL), and analyses the anti-racist campaign carried out by local Labour Party authorities, especially the Greater London Council (GLC) (114-152). While much useful work was accomplished by these self-declared anti-racist movements, Gilroy suggests that a more sophisticated and practical understanding of 'race' as a complex effect of underlying problems, such as "poor housing, unemployment, repatriation, violence, or aggressive indifference," is revealed in the "expressive culture" of blacks in Britain whose oppositional practices are aligned with a larger diasporic black liberation politics (154), and whose cultural practices became the topic of discussion in debates about black representation.

Realism and the Dynamics of Differentiation: Debates in Black Representation

By the 1980s, thanks to the organized anti-racist movement and the growing expressive culture of blacks in Britain, contestations over questions of cultural difference, identity and otherness in Britain were moving, in Julien's and

Mercer's terms, from 'de margin' to 'de centre' ("De Margin and De Centre" 450-51). And public institutions started paying attention. The demand for black representation by the broad-based coalition of minority communities "informed shifts in multicultural and 'equal opportunity' policy among institutions such as [BBC's] Channel Four, the British Film Institute and local authorities such as the Greater London Council," which resulted in public funding, especially for black film-makers, by the early 1980s (Julien and Mercer 452). These institutions recognized the diversity of audiences and responded by providing funding, and by committing to new programming strategies, which supported the emergence and success of several black film collectives. As Ann Ogidi tells it, black film collectives "like Sankofa, Ceddo, Retake Film and Video and Black Audio Film Collective benefited from policies that explicitly recognized the diversity of audiences and encouraged different forms of expression. By 1985, over 20 groups were showing work on Channel 4, representing the peak of a wider community television movement" (par. 2). With the increase in the quantity of black films being produced and screened, both on television and in cinemas, "significant shifts and critical differences in attitude to the means of representation" became apparent, and critics and artists alike sought a critical framework within which to discuss the cultural and political implications of these different modes of representation (Mercer, "Diaspora Culture and the Dialogic Imagination" 50).

In the early years of black film-making in Britain, it was so difficult to get any oppositional black voice heard in the larger public domain that black artists

who focused on providing 'positive' images of the black community were lauded, and black critics, as well as the larger black community, tended towards a celebration of any black work that contested the dominant stereotypes of black Britons (Henriques 18). But as more films by black film-makers appeared in the late 1980s, the lack of an adequate critical framework for discussing these works became more and more problematic. In a community that had "hardly begun to develop any kind of critical framework" in which to discuss the work by black artists, writes Julien Henriques, the important questions became: "*By what criteria should we distinguish between good and bad art?* What do we want art to be anyway? Which developments of style, technique, or content are a step forward and which a step back?" (18, italics in original). Thus began what Julien and Mercer characterize as "intense debates on aesthetic and cinematic strategies within the black British independent sector" (452).

Two pieces published in *The Guardian* in January 1987 have been referenced by cultural commentators as representative of what was at stake in these debates, and as an important episode in the development of a critical framework for evaluating black art in Britain.[8] On January 12, *The Guardian* published a review by Salman Rushdie of the newly released *Handsworth Songs* (dir. John Akomfrah), a documentary film about the 1981 and 1982 'riots' in Tottenham and Brixton produced by the Black Audio Film Collective. Rushdie

[8]See, for example, Mercer's "Diaspora Culture and The Dialogic Imagination," Hall's "New Ethnicities," Julien's and Mercer's "De Margin and De Centre," and ICA's *Black Film British Cinema*.

harshly critiques the film, saying he saw nothing beyond the traditional stereotypes of blacks in the documentary: "What we get is what we know from TV. Blacks as trouble; blacks as victims." There are other, more interesting stories to be told, argues Rushdie. Why not tell these stories instead of the same old? ("Songs Doesn't Know the Score" 16-17). He acknowledges the difficulty of getting black voices heard, and of fighting against stereotypes, but does not think it is "much help" to simply "cheer" when someone manages to "get something said" (17). Rushdie thinks the makers of *Handsworth Songs* should have focused on "the much richer language of their subjects" (16). He wants to see the diversity of Handsworth's population, the rich reality of their existence. "It's important," he believes, "to tell such stories; to say, this is England: *Allahu Akbar* from the minaret of Birmingham mosque . . . These are English scenes now. English songs" (17).

On January 15, *The Guardian* published a letter written by Stuart Hall in response to Rushdie's critique. In his letter, Hall "take[s] issue with the way Salman Rushdie . . . attacked Black Audio Film Collective and its film *Handsworth Songs*, from his well-deserved but secure position in the literary firmament" ("Song of Handsworth Praise" 17). While Hall agrees with Rushdie's sentiment that films cannot be praised just because they are made by blacks, he argues that Rushdie's critical framework meant he missed the way the film-makers were searching for a "new language" by breaking with the "tired style of the riot-documentary." He asserts that the film does precisely what Rushdie

claimed it did not do, i.e., "tell the black experience as an *English* experience" (17). Hall lists the formal strategies the film-makers used in their attempt to find a new language to represent black experience: retimed, tinted, and overprinted documentary footage; narrative interruptions; highly original and unpredictable sound-track; 'giving voice' to new subjects; inter-cutting with the 'ghosts of other stories' (17).

The common ground between Rushdie and Hall is their insistence on the importance of representing the experience of blacks in Britain as an English experience. That is, they do not see the black British experience as culturally separate from the nation, as those who espoused the 'new racism' would have it. Another issue at stake in debates about black representation that is revealed by their discussion is whether or not realist aesthetic practices[9] pose an effective challenge to the overwhelmingly negative stereotypes of blacks in Britain. Rushdie argues that instead of "describing a living world in the dead language of race industry professionals," *Handsworth Songs* could simply have avoided reproducing negative stereotypes by mining Handsworth for its "English scenes," and the "English songs" of its inhabitants: "I don't know Handsworth very well, but I do know it's bursting with tales worth telling" ("Songs Doesn't Know the Score" 16).

Telling 'real' tales would, in Rushdie's view, avoid the reproduction of negative stereotypes and produce a more 'positive' image of blacks than did

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[9]Julien Henriques defines realism as follows: "the tradition in which works of art are seen as attempting to offer an accurate representation of reality as it is recognized by the viewer" (18).

Handsworth Songs. Alternatively, Hall suggests that telling 'real' stories of blacks in Britain using realist modes of representation is not enough to counter 'negative' images. By suggesting that Rushdie's critical framework caused him to overlook the ways *Handsworth Songs* reworked documentary conventions by problematizing realist aesthetic modes, Hall also suggests that a new critical framework must be developed in order to understand how artists are developing new methods for representing the complexities of black experience in Britain. These new developments are productive, argues Hall, because they work towards the formation of representational strategies that move beyond the method of countering 'negative' images with 'positive' ones. These questions about the role of realism in representing black experience, and how best to develop modes of representation that move beyond countering 'negative' images with 'positive' ones, are central to the subsequent debates and theoretical developments in black representation in Britain.

As Mercer points out, many black independent films of the 1970s that engaged with a realist aesthetic played a valuable role in "providing a counter-discourse against those versions of reality produced by dominant voices and discourses in British film and media" ("Diaspora Culture" 52). But while he acknowledges the strengths of an "insistent emphasis on the real" in both documentary and narrative film, Mercer also recognizes the limits of realism as a mode of resistance to racism. Realism depends, he writes, on the "reality-effect," which relies on "the operation of four characteristic values–transparency, immediacy, authority and authenticity–which are in fact aesthetic values central

to the dominant film and media culture itself" ("Diaspora Culture" 53). As Henriques points out, "[f]or realism, artistic judgment always remains at the level of how adequately reality is reflected. The huge assumption that is made in this view is, of course, that we all know and agree what reality is" (10), when in fact, we do not agree.

A major problem with replacing 'negative' images of blacks with 'positive' ones, and claiming that these images better represent 'real' black experience, is that these images are subjective, and they often exclude those differences deemed 'negative' by the larger black community. In relation to the exclusion of black queers, for instance, Julien says that black "[i]dentity politics in its positive-images variant is always purchased in the field of representation at the price of the repression of the [queer] other" ("Black is, Black Ain't" 77).

Another major drawback of the realist format, critics argue, is that it is inadequate for dealing with the contradictions inherent in black experience. The assumption of fixed identity that the 'positive'/'negative' binary presumes, argues Mercer, fails to account for the "dynamics of differentiation" that come into play in the processes of both individual and collective assertions of identity. The "dynamics of differentiation" depend on the "structural interdependence of opposites," a binary process that differentiates black from white, female from male, and queer from straight (Mercer, "Busy in the Ruins" 23-26). While the structural interdependence of opposites allows the disavowal of stereotypes and the presentation of 'positive' images of blacks, it simultaneously ensures that these reversal strategies do nothing to destabilize the structural process that

underlies racial, gender and sexual differentiation.

Hall describes the shift resulting from the debates in black representational practices and politics as "a change from a struggle over the relations of representation to a politics of representation itself." Artists working within this new politics of representation model rejected the mimetic theory of representation in favor of the idea that "it is only within the discursive, and subject to its specific conditions, limits and modalities" that events, relations and structures have or can be "constructed within meaning" (Hall, "New Ethnicities" 442-43). These artists began treating representational practices as constitutive, rather than merely expressive, of subjects, identities and politics. And they understood the category 'black' as culturally and politically constructed, rather than grounded in "a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories." Hall dubbed the move away from the essentialist understanding of black identity: "the end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject" ("New Ethnicities" 443). As noted above, at stake in this shift away from the notion of the essential black subject was an understanding that a continued presentation of 'positive' images excluded and rejected a wide range of diverse experiences, subject positions and cultural identities which composed the category 'black'.

For black British artists who rejected the essentialist model of black identity and comprehended questions of representation and subjectivity as "*constitutive* of the politics of decolonisation" (Hall, "The After-life of Frantz Fanon" 18), Fanon's analysis of the construction of black subjectivity under

colonialism, articulated in *Black Skin, White Masks*, offered a compelling theoretical model for resistance. In black diasporic art of the 1980s, writes Mercer, Fanon's writings "returned in all their force and fluidity as an indispensable resource for making sense of the psycho-politics of the multicultural social body" ("Busy" 16). For these contemporary artists, Fanon's argument that through the either/or logic of Self and Other, "colonial discourse brings into being the very identities that it discriminates within the optic of 'racial' difference" ("Busy," Mercer 24), was particularly compelling. As Stuart Hall notes, they worked closely with Fanon's proposition that racism operates by means of a binary structure, a manichean system of representation and power in which the 'Negro' is *fixed* as the white man's Other from without "by the fantasmic binaries of fear and desire which have governed the representation of the black figure in colonial discourse and which, [Fanon] argues, lie at the heart of the psychic reality of racism" ("After-life" 17-18).

Working closely with Fanon's theory of racial psychopathology,[10] Mercer asserts that notwithstanding the increase in 'positive' images of blacks, racial stereotypes still affect black subjectivity, acting as "'internal foreign objects' around which self-perception is always 'alienated' by the way one is perceived by others as *the* other. Because, as Fanon contended, racist discourse projects the "repressed fantasies of the imperial master" onto black bodies, blacks will

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[10]Fanon's theory of colonial psychopathology and racialized subjectivity is outlined in more detail in Chapter One, where I also discuss his theory of the role of interracial desire in relation to the construction of black male subjectivity.

continue to suffer the psychological impacts of racism as long as the structural interdependence of opposites remains intact, and the dynamics of differentiation remain hidden (Mercer, "Busy" 28).

Engagement with Fanon's proposition of the either/or structure of colonial discourse led to the development of new representational strategies designed to challenge the binary systems of identification and to interrogate 'identity' and 'subjectivity' as constructed, variable and negotiable. To this end, artists sought to "bring to the surface–into representation–that which has sustained the regimes of representation unacknowledged" (Hall, "After-life" 19). They worked with Fanon's fear/fantasy formulation to develop aesthetic practices that might reveal and subvert the structures of racial 'othering'. This formulation, writes Mercer, was "echoed and disseminated across a whole range of critical developments," and became "the most salient aspect of the diaspora aesthetics" (Mercer, "Busy" 15):

> The fear/fantasy formulation signaled a decisive shift with regards to the strategies of counter-discourse performed by black artists in film, photography and fine art. Breaking through the impasse of the outmoded negative/positive images dichotomy inherited from earlier phases in struggles for self-representation, it could be seen to punctuate what Stuart Hall prophetically called, 'the end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject.' (Mercer, "Busy" 20)

By creating artwork that explored the intersections of race and gender, especially in terms of interracial fear and fantasy, diasporic artists brought to the surface the structural interdependence of opposites that produced racial and sexual Otherness in colonial discourse, and provided the foundational dynamic for racial stereotyping.

Bringing the structural interdependence of opposites to the surface involved challenging the notion of 'fixity' which, as Homi Bhabha posited in his 1983 article "The Other Question," is a concept upon which "the ideological construction of otherness" depends. "[A]s the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism," Bhabha writes, fixity "is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition" (18). Bhabha's main focus in "The Other Question" is an exploration of how the stereotype, a major discursive strategy of colonial discourse, operates as "a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated . . . ." (18). The "process of *ambivalence*," he writes, is a central strategy of both the concept of fixity and the stereotype, and functions as one of the "most significant discursive and psychical strategies of discriminatory power–whether racist or sexist, peripheral or metropolitan" (18).

Bhabha's response to the debates in black representation about how to intervene in the reproduction of negative stereotypes is crucially informed by his reading of the force of ambivalence in colonial discourse:

> the point of intervention should shift from the *identification* of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the *processes of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse. To judge the stereotyped image on the basis of a prior political normativity is to dismiss it, not to displace it, which is only possible by engaging with its *effectivity*; with the repertoire of positions of power and resistance, domination and dependence that constructs the colonial subject (both coloniser and colonised) (18).

Working with images of interraciality, some black visual artists engaged more closely with the 'processes of subjectification' as a method of displacing, rather than just dismissing, stereotyped images. These images contributed to a deeper understanding of the structural interdependence of opposites, and the dynamics of differentiation, because they examined how subjects were produced as racialized and gendered through the process of ambivalence.

For Mercer, Keith Piper's 1983 painting, *The Body Politic*, provides a key example of how images of interraciality can bring the process of ambivalence to the surface, and expose their function in the construction of racialized and gendered subjects. *The Body Politic* is a large-scale painting that juxtaposes images of two bodies–one white and female and the other black and male–with text. The two bodies, which are nude and headless, are on either side of two canvasses attached to a wooden framed that is joined by hinges. This painting shows how representations of (heterosexual) interracial fear and desire can expose the deep psychic and social ambivalences of identity that Fanon saw as constitutive of both black and white subjectivity, and that Bhabha articulates as a key strategy of the production of racial and sexual Otherness. Mercer observes that the two figures in Piper's painting "mime and mirror one another across the body of text which gives voice to mutual claims of misrecognition, 'To you I was always (just) a body . . . I was your best fantasy and your worst fear. Everything to you but human'" ("Busy" 15). The black man and white woman imitate each other in their inability to signify as human, i.e., as white and male. The other's lack is a mirror against which their own lack is measured; their similarity lies in

the fact that they do not occupy the category of white masculinity. But the categories they do occupy, as gendered and raced subjects who are not simultaneously white and male, also signify their difference from each other.

From each perspective the other is less-than-human, "(just) a body" (Mercer, "Busy" 15): at once valued and devalued as sexual object in the fear/fantasy dynamic of attraction and repulsion. Mercer writes:

> [The painting's] depiction of doubling across the boundaries of sex and race, the chiasmus of difference that is inscribed as a relationship of both polarity and complementarity, draws attention to the 'danger zone' of psychic and social ambivalence as it is lived in the complexity and contradictions of a multicultural society. The difficulty of articulating sexual and racial difference together, as sources of social division constantly thrusting identities apart, while simultaneously binding them intimately beneath the cliché that 'opposites attract,' pinpoints the key displacements brought about, over the past decade, by the hybrid interplay of postcolonial and postmodern paradigms in contemporary cultural politics. (Mercer, "Busy" 15)

In Mercer's view, Piper's painting employs the fear/fantasy formulation of (heterosexual) repulsion and attraction between (straight) black men and (straight) white women, revealing how ambivalence operates as the key signifying strategy for inscribing Otherness, both racial and sexual. When they are hinged together, racial and sexual difference become double markers of social division that allow for identities to be articulated as binary opposites: black/white, female/male. Sexual and racial difference, thereby, function to constantly "[thrust] identities apart." However, those identities are also always bound together: through their mutual dependence on each other to signify as either male or female, black or white, and through their mutual fear of and desire for each other. This ambivalence acts as both sign and symptom of heterosexual

interracial desire. Mercer posits that the wealth of insights into the dynamics of fear and desire articulated by Bhabha in "The Other Question" "can be seen to double back into the representation of interracial sexuality investigated in Piper's art: both lead us into the ambiguous realm where different differences intersect" ("Busy" 16).

Interraciality and the Sexual Politics of Decolonization

In the following pages I analyze images of interraciality to further expose the dynamics of differentiation in operation at the intersections of racial domination and female subordination. As outlined above, Part I concentrates on texts where interracial desire operates as a significant representational device in the production of images of South Asian men in the diaspora. As narratives that represent South Asian men negotiating masculinity from within the bounds of a socially, politically and discursively hostile environment, these texts engage with the dynamics of differentiation that attempt to 'fix' the figure of the South Asian male in place. One of the ways these texts negotiate black male subjectivity is through images of interracial desire, which bring to the surface the structural interdependence of opposites, and give these texts the potential to 'unfix' colonial and neo-imperial stereotypes. But while these images of interraciality challenge racial stereotypes by exposing the dynamics of differentiation, they often also recreate patriarchal and heternormative power relations. To put it another way, though the inclusion of images of interracial desire can work to unsettle the binary logic underlying racial and gender differentiation in these

texts, some of them undermine their own radical potential by refixing gender and sexual binaries in order to confer patriarchal power to South Asian men.

Mercer points to this phenomenon in representations of interraciality between black men and white women in film from the 1940s to the 1990s. He posits that the fear/fantasy dynamic and the fetishization of purity in colonial discourse are often maintained in film that represents the transference of masculine power from white patriarch to black patriarch:

> Images of interraciality are so overdetermined by inchoate fears and fantasies, of mixing as a threat to purity, that its cultural representation rarely escapes the codification of a 'problem-oriented' discourse, as seen in the films of Fanon's era in the 1940s such as *Lost Boundaries*, *Islands in the Sun*, or, *The World, the Flesh and the Devil*. Yet in the post-war treatment of miscegenation in the movies, in the transition from say, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967) to Spike Lee's *Jungle Fever* (1991), the narrative shift from white patriarch to black patriarch merely reveals an implicit continuum in which interracial relationships are rarely portrayed for what they are, that is, relationships, but for what they are made to mean as a token of one's 'true' loyalties, affiliations and identifications. (Mercer, "Busy in the Ruins of Wretched Phantasia" 47-48)

As Mercer's observations suggest, the cultural representation of interracial desire carries with it the threat of racial impurity, and therefore readily serves as a signifier of "one's 'true' loyalties, affiliations and identifications" in films that relocate male power from white to black patriarch. So although images of interracial desire have the potential to reveal the dynamics of differentiation that underwrite colonial discourse, this potential can be co-opted in the interest of those wishing only to challenge racial stereotypes through a reversal of the dichotomous logic that categorizes blacks as inferior.

In the process of reinstating the male/female and hetero/homosexual

binaries, the manichean logic that fixes the racial binary is also reinstated, as are the racially coded constructions of masculinity and femininity that underwrite racial domination and female subordination. Thus, just as the reversal strategy of replacing positive with negative images does nothing to destabilize the structural process underlying racist discourse, the transference of white male power to black men simply repeats the same oppressive dynamic, working, in many cases, to validate notions of female inferiority and the 'unnaturalness' of queer sexualities. In representations that claim patriarchal power for black men at the cost of reproducing the ideology of racial purity, the "innocent notion" of the "essential black subject" is embraced, and the binary logic that underwrites racism and other discriminatory practices is left intact.

Interracial desire appears in so many narratives about South Asians in the diaspora that a much larger study is required to investigate and compare the work it does in a wide-variety of texts and contexts.[11] My aim here is to begin developing a useful methodology for examining the role of interracial desire in various discursive realms, and for this reason I have limited Part I to the study of a small sample of texts and focus on how the dynamics of differentiation are used in these narratives to construct images of diasporic South Asian masculinity in Britain. As I suggested earlier, the texts I study here either reproduce the

[11]An expanded study would investigate the role of interracial desire in a broader range of diasporic literature and film, including, for instance, the highly popular U.S. film *The Guru*, British author Zadie Smith's first novel *White Teeth*, and director Srinivas Krishna's Canadian film *Masala*. It would also extend the analysis to different configurations of the interracial couple, such as South Asian women and white men in Gurinder Chadha's *Bend it Like Beckham* and *Bride and Prejudice* and queer interracial desire in Ian Iqbal Rashid's *A Touch of Pink*.

"oppressive symbolic universe" that form what Mercer calls "the interior limits of decolonisation," i.e., sexism and homophobia ("Decolonisation and Disappointment" 119), or they break through these interior limits and resist the reproduction of racial, gender *and* sexual binaries that enforce the manichean logic that underwrites all discriminatory discourse. And sometimes they do both simultaneously. Because, as I outline above, the binary categories that construct subjects in oppositional ways are mutually constitutive and interdependent, as well as chronically unstable, they must continuously be reiterated to maintain the fiction of their status as opposites. If this is the case, then one point of intervention is through the representation of subjectivities that do not reiterate this discursive logic. It is my contention that we can learn a great deal about strategies for undermining and resisting this discursive logic from the creative work of those who, through their engagement with an image that exposes the ambivalence of the process that differentiates subjects on oppositional grounds, provide new possibilities for simultaneously resisting racism, sexism and homophobia. The ultimate goal, of course, is to liberate all subjects from the oppressive symbolic universe that constructs us in opposition to each other in multiple and intersecting ways.

I begin, in Chapter One, with a discussion of Frantz Fanon's influential work on the effects of colonial racism on the subjectivity of the black man, and his thoughts on interracial desire between black men and white women in *Black Skin, White Masks*. The chapter goes on to analyze Hanif Kureishi's engagement with Fanon's ideas of the role of interracial desire in the struggle for psychic

decolonization in his first novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Kureishi's novel draws constructive parallels between the psychic effects of racism on colonized blacks and on post-colonized South Asian men in Britain, and re-opens Fanon's discussion of the role of interracial desire in decolonization for contemporary blacks in Britain. I demonstrate how representations of interracial desire in Kureishi's novel draw attention to interracial homosocial fear and desire in Fanon's text, and argue that *The Buddha of Suburbia* constitutes both a celebration of Fanon's insights and a critique of the limits of his work for understanding contemporary diasporic subjects and the project of psychic decolonization. Kureishi's critique is achieved through scenes of interracial desire in which his biracial and bisexual protagonist, Karim, negotiates the various binaries that attempt to 'fix' his identity as a black, working-class, heterosexual male. Instead of relying on the assertion of an essential black male identity as a means of gaining social power for his protagonist, Kureishi reveals the contradictions inherent in black experience, and the novel embraces ambivalence and posits hybridity as a method for subverting the manichean structure of discriminatory discourse in relation to race, gender, sexuality and class.

Chapter Two investigates the role of interracial desire in Abdullah Hussein's novella "The Journey Back" and Udayan Prasad's film version of the text, *Brothers in Trouble*. While Hussein's narrative portrays cross-cultural mixing between Pakistani Muslim men and a white working-class British woman as the cause of death and insanity for the male migrants, Prasad's film critiques this

representation by revealing how women function as fetish-objects to mediate relations between the men. The novella attempts to maintain the binary logic that differentiates common law from customary practice. This dynamics of differentiation was established in colonial discourse as a way of authorizing racial discrimination, and it is increasingly prevalent in neo-imperial discourse. In the novella, a white woman stands in for the West and its practices of common law, and must therefore be eradicated from the homosocial world of the South Asian male migrants. Prasad's *Brothers in Trouble* challenges this reliance on the manichean system of representation and power in which the white woman is fixed as gender and racial other by revealing how women, both white British and brown South Asian, are used as fetish-objects between the men in their quest to gain masculine certainty in their new location. The film makes visible the invisible reproduction of the dynamics of differentiation that validate the authority and importance of homosocial community in the novella, drawing attention to the contiguities between patriarchal practices in common law and customary practice, and suggesting that the maintenance of patriarchal control in racist Britain comes at a high cost to both women and men.

In Chapter Three I analyze how the motif of interracial desire is employed in the popular British film *East is East*, written by Ayub Khan-Din and directed by Damien O'Donnell. The film wages a simultaneous critique of the liberal British state's logic of national and racial purity and British Islamic notions of religious and cultural purity through a focus on the Pakistani Muslim patriarch's ambivalent relationship to interracial marriage, and the representation of what Pnina

Werbner calls "intentional hybridities" (Werbner 903). The film exposes the impossibility of purity through a critique of George Khan's inability to live with the ambivalence opened up by his interracial marriage, and indicates that his insistence on purity is a response to both racist exclusion from the British state, and the Pakistani Muslim community's unwillingness to fully accept him and his 'mixed-race' children. But while the film provides complex reasons for George's turn to 'tradition' and the discourse of religious and cultural purity, it reproduces the stereotype of Muslim women as the ultimate signifiers and enforcers of religious traditionalism and of national and racial purity. Thus, the film's positing of hybridity and impurity as a method of displacing the binary logic of the essential black subject is no guarantee of a radical politics committed to confronting discrimination on all fronts.

Part II consists of Chapter Four, which is the final chapter of the dissertation. In it I combine the interpretive tools of anti-racist feminism and colonial discourse analysis outlined at the beginning of this introduction with those developed through my close readings of South Asian British literature and film in Part I. Using this critical framework to expose the structural interdependence of opposites reproduced through images of interraciality, I closely examine three different stories about white female soldiers in media narratives of the 2003 invasion of Iraq: the photograph and article published in *The Globe and Mail* (which I discuss in my Preface); the production of Jessica Lynch as a heroic victim; and the construction of Lynndie England–the U.S. soldier photographed with Iraqi male victims of torture at Abu Ghraib prison–as a

depraved villain. I argue that narratives dominating the media during the initial stages of the invasion evoke colonial memory by reiterating the image of the dark rapist as a threat to white women in Eastern space. I also examine how the dynamics of differentiation were exploited by the media to shift the significance of white femininity from a symbol of U.S. benevolence to a symbol of U.S. depravity and malevolence just fourteen months later. I argue that the media expertly manipulate the intersectionalities of race, gender, sexuality and class to rouse deeply established fears of the racial other, whilst simultaneously refixing these categories as discrete and stable. The manichean logic of colonial discourse is refashioned through this interracial pairing, I contend, to justify the imperialist violence currently inflicted in Iraq in the name of the U.S.-led 'war on terror'. I end with a brief discussion of how, by bringing together techniques devised by those challenging white heteropatriachy both from an anti-racist feminist perspective and from the position of those challenging the interior limits of decolonization, we can continue to intervene in the manichean logic that must continuously be 'unfixed' if we are to effectively expose, confront and abolish the intertwined practices of racism, sexism and homophobia at their ideological roots.

Part I

Rewriting Brown Masculinity in Post-Colonial Britain:

Beyond the Stereotype of the Dark Rapist

Chapter One

Desire and Decolonization: Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* And Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*

> Out of the blackest part of my soul, across the zebra striping of my mind, surges this desire to be suddenly *white*. (Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 63)
>
> I prayed to God to make me white. The myth of black inferiority, having been preached at me for so long, convinced me that the way out was to become a white man. (Remi Kapo, *A Savage Culture: Racism–A Black British View* 8)
>
> And Charlie? My love for him was unusual as love goes: it was not generous. I admired him more than anyone but I didn't wish him well. It was that I preferred him to me and wanted to be him. (Karim Amir from Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* 15)

In this chapter, I analyze Kureishi's first novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, published in 1990, through the lens of Frantz Fanon's 1952 book, *Black Skin, White Masks*. I focus on how Kureishi's novel engages with Fanon's conceptualization of the effects of colonial racism on the subjectivity of the black man, especially in relation to the role and significance of interracial desire in the struggle towards decolonization. As a writer who directly acknowledges Fanon's influence on his own racial politics ("The Rainbow Sign" 14), and whose first novel grapples with interracial desire in ways strikingly similar to Fanon's engagement with the topic in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Kureishi's work contributes to a much larger discussion of the value and limits of Fanon's theories of colonial psychopathology and colonial resistance for people of colour in the post-colonial diaspora.[1]

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[1] In "The After-life of Frantz Fanon: Why Fanon? Why Now? Why *Black Skin, White Masks*?," Stuart Hall examines the influence of Fanon on the visual artists featured in the Institute of Contemporary Art's (ICA) 1995 exhibition, *Mirage: Enigmas of Race, Difference and Desire*.

There are, to be sure, countless differences between the historical, geographical, national, political and cultural contexts of Fanon and Kureishi, and between Fanon's colonized, heterosexual, male "Negro of the Antilles" *(BSWM* 14) and Karim Amir, the contemporary, mixed-race, bisexual British Asian protagonist of *The Buddha of Suburbia*. But there are also significant and productive similarities between the contexts and subjects of these two works. One of the most striking similarities is that both Fanon and Kureishi articulate the struggle for black male subjectivity in a racist culture as one that compels black men to express a desire to be white. Moreover, both Kureishi and Fanon suggest that the black man's desire to be white manifests itself through a desire to possess white lovers. The novel's representation of Karim's desire for white lovers, both female and male, and Karim's self-conscious reflections about what motivates this desire, provide a contemporary inquiry, from the perspective of a British-born, mixed-race writer, into the potentials and limits of Fanon's ideas of the effects of racism on black male subjectivities and sexualities. My analysis of Kureishi's engagement with Fanon's ideas of black male subjectivity and interracial desire provides an introduction of the ideological framework within which interracial desire has traditionally been articulated as a strategy of resistance to racism and colonialism, and investigates the usefulness of this

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Hall observes that while many of these contemporary artists "acknowledge some debt of influence, usually indirect, to Fanon's work, "others, unfamiliar with his theories, "unwittingly . . . betray the 'trace' of his presence" ("After-life" 14). Kureishi both acknowledges a debt of influence to Fanon and grapples with his theory of black subjectivity and the role of interracial desire in decolonization, contributing to a larger discussion of the influence of Fanon's work in both creative and critical realms.

strategy in relation to the contemporary project of psycho-political decolonization in a post-colonial, but not post-racist, context. Additionally, this analysis contributes to my larger investigation of the efficacy of Fanon's strategy in relation to the goal of exposing and challenging the interior limits of decolonization.

The Buddha of Suburbia suggests that despite major contextual differences, the effects of racism on the black man's psyche in contemporary Britain are analogous to the effects of racism produced by French colonialism during Fanon's time. It also indicates that Kureishi agrees with Fanon's claims that interracial desire for white women by black men under conditions of racism signifies both a desire for revenge on white men for colonialism, and a desire to 'possess' whiteness, or to "be suddenly *white*" (Fanon 63). Kureishi also agrees with Fanon's assertion that the black man cannot decolonize his psyche, or fight the racist structures that have caused his feelings of inferiority, if he engages in interracial sex as either a mode of revenge or an attempt to possess whiteness for himself. But while Fanon's text suggests that interracial desire under conditions of racism cannot signify as anything but revenge or possession, and is therefore not an advisable strategy for obtaining either material or psychic decolonization, Kureishi represents interracial desire as a practice that can challenge racism at its ideological roots.

Through an engagement with Fanon's ideas about the psychic effects of racism and the meanings of interracial desire, Kureishi represents interracial

desire as a challenge to notions of social, cultural, national and racial purity that form the ideological underpinnings of racism. When read with the understanding that Fanon's ideas are part of Kureishi's theoretical backdrop, *The Buddha of Suburbia* provides insights into how Fanon's articulations of the psychological effects of racism have contributed to models for re-configuring social relations in a post-colonial context. More specifically, it shows us how contemporary engagements with Fanon's work have contributed to Kureishi's ability to articulate a politics and practice of hybridity that confronts internalized racist stereotypes and challenges concepts of purity as reductive, narrow and threatening (Needham 121-23). The novel also reveals how sexual politics function as the interior limit of decolonization in discourses of black nationalism that, like Fanon's, espouse a narrow concept of black masculinity (Mercer, "Decolonisation and Disappointment" 119).

Section I of this chapter outlines, in detail, Fanon's theory of colonial psychopathology and interracial desire, and his prescription for decolonizing the psyche of the black man. Section II begins with a discussion of the connections between Kureishi's own situation as the son of an English mother and Pakistani father growing up in England in the 1970s and his articulation of a racial politics of hybridity, which becomes clear in his biographical essays and interviews, and is worked out on an imaginative level through his portrayal of Karim in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. I then move on to an analysis of how the novel engages the theoretical and political concerns about interracial desire in the construction of

black male subjectivity raised by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*. I argue that by exposing how the dynamics of differentiation work through images of interraciality between brown men and white women, Kureishi's representations of interracial desire in a post-colonial and diasporic context enable a deeper understanding of the complexities of psychic decolonization and resistance for British South Asians male subjects living in what Salman Rushdie has dubbed "The New Empire Within Britain."[2]

Fanon and Blackphobia: Interracial Desire and Colonial Psychopathology

> If one wants to understand the racial situation psychoanalytically . . . considerable importance must be given to sexual phenomena. (Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 160)

One of Fanon's most important contributions to the study of interracial desire, and how it might function as a mode of resistance to racism, is his articulation of how the manichean structures of racism get reinforced and played out on the intimate level of sexual encounter. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon develops his theory of colonial psychopathology and proposes "nothing short of the liberation of the man of color from himself" (8).[3] Fanon sees black subjectivity

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[2]In "The New Empire Within Britain," Salman Rushdie argues that the same racist attitudes that were in operation during the heyday of British Imperialism, are in operation today, and that nothing has been done to eradicate them. In fact, he argues, the British have simply "import[ed] a new Empire, a new community of subject peoples of whom they think, and with whom they can deal, in very much the same way as their [colonized] predecessors" (130).

[3]The question articulated by Homi Bhabha in his 1986 Pluto Press edition of *Black Skin, White Masks*, "when is 'man' not a man, but people" in Fanon, has been debated by mostly feminist critics. (See, for example, Lola Young's "Missing Persons: Fantasising Black Women in *Black Skin, White Masks*" and bell hooks' "Feminism as a Persistent Critique of History: What's Love Got To Do With It?" in *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*. Ed. Alan Read. London: ICA., 1996. 86-101. See also T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting's *Frantz Fanon:*

as overdetermined by the cultural and historical fact of white racism and imperialism, but insists that the decolonization of the mind of the 'black man,' that is, the production of a new kind of subject, is possible. He hopes that by analyzing the "massive psychoexistential complex" produced by colonialism he is taking a crucial step towards its destruction (12).

In Fanon's view, the "disalienation of the black man" is a cultural and discursive process that inscribes inferiority onto his body. This "inferiority complex" is, he argues, "the outcome of a double process: –primarily, economic; –subsequently, the internalization–or, better, the epidermalization–of this inferiority" (11). Colonial racism operates as a binary system of representation and power through which the black man develops a split or divided self. The black subject is split or divided within himself through the racist practices of colonialism, which force him to see himself from the perspective of the white man, to be fixed by the 'look' from outside, and to become a 'self' which is always other, even to himself. The colonial Negro is "overdetermined from

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Conflicts and Feminisms and Gwen Bergner's "Who Is That Masked Woman? or, The Role of Gender in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*). These debates are extremely important for understanding how, as Gwen Bergner writes, "[Fanon's] account of normative raced masculinity depends on the production or exclusion of femininities" (77). Since it is his construction of black masculinity that I focus on, and I can always assume that black men are included under the terms 'the man of colour, 'black men' and 'the black man,' his use of the male referent does not pose an obvious problem for my focus on his concept of black masculinity. In my summary of Fanon's ideas about the ways black men are constructed in racist colonial discourse, and how he envisions resistance to racism and colonialism, I use the same gender referents he does to retain the ambiguity of the original text, rather than assuming I can, or should, resolve those ambiguities here. When I am not summarizing Fanon, I use 'black man' to signify those who are constructed as black male subjects, exclusively, and the term 'brown man' to signify the racialized category of masculinity that refers to South Asian, Arab and/or Muslim men. Additionally, in my analysis of *The Buddha of Suburbia* in the second section of this chapter, I show how Kureishi draws attention to and critiques Fanon's focus on the homosocial. Fanon's heterosexist focus, and his apparent homophobia, are also specifically addressed in my analysis of Kureishi's queering of

without" (116), writes Fanon. He is *fixed* from the outside by the gaze of the (white) other and "encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema" (110).

Teresa de Lauretis observes that Fanon's analysis demonstrates how stereotypes can be consciously rejected, while simultaneously internalized on an unconscious level. The unconscious internalization of stereotypes constitute what Mercer recognizes as the "'internal foreign objects' around which self-perception" remains alienated even when countered by 'positive' images ("Busy in the Ruins" 28). And this internalization of stereotypes is, in Fanonian terms, what prevents "'the liberation of the black man from himself': or rather, from that (part of) himself that identifies with the stereotype" (de Lauretis 65). It is this psychic internalization of stereotypes that Fanon wishes to bring to the surface; and he hopes that this process will enable his patients to choose to struggle against colonization and its effects.

Beneath the bodily schema, which makes body-consciousness a "negating activity" (110), Fanon posits a "historico-racial schema": "The elements that I used [to develop a self] had been provided for me . . . by the other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories" (111). Under colonial racism, writes Fanon, "the black is not a man" (8), since to be a man, one must also signify as 'white'. Once the black man has accepted the lie of black inferiority, he is continually compelled to "prove to the other that he is

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racialized masculinity in *The Buddha of Suburbia*.

a man, their equal" (66): "From the moment the Negro accepts the separation imposed by the European he has no further respite and 'is it not understandable that thenceforward he will try to elevate himself to the white man's level? To elevate himself in the range of colors to which he attributes a kind of hierarchy?'" (81-82).[4] According to Fanon, then, the black man's acceptance of black inferiority compels him to prove himself equal to the white man: to prove himself a man under the conditions of, and in the eyes of, the white man.

While Fanon considers the conditions under which the inferiority complex is imposed on colonial subjects "overdetermined from without," he also thinks there is a possibility that various forms of agency can be exercised by those subjected to colonial racism. If there are moments, or a series of moments, during which "the Negro accepts the separation imposed by the European" (81), these moments might also be seen as opportunities to psychologically reject racial separation. Fanon's proposal for "saving" his patients from the inferiority complex that compels them to desire whiteness also suggests that black subjects under colonialism have agency within the historico-racial schema that overdetermines black subjectivity. His purpose is to "help [his] patient to become *conscious* of his unconscious and abandon his attempts at hallucinatory whitening." Once the patient becomes conscious, he is encouraged "to act in the direction of a change in the social structure":

In other words, the black man should no longer be confronted by the

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[4]Fanon is quoting Claude Nordey from *L'homme de couleur* (Paris, Collection "Présences," Plon. 1939).

> dilemma, *turn white or disappear*, but he should be able to take cognizance of a possibility of existence. . . . my objective will not be that of dissuading him from [his unconscious desire to change color] by advising him to 'keep his place'; on the contrary, my objective, once his motivations have been brought into consciousness, will be to put him in a position to *choose* action (or passivity) with respect to the real source of the conflict– that is, toward the social structures (100).

Here, Fanon suggests that the movement towards psychological consciousness is also a movement towards political consciousness, and that understanding the political effects of racism are part of the healing process of the split psyche. The healing of the split psyche, for Fanon, makes it possible for the patient to make a choice about participating in the material struggle against colonialism, which might very well involve revolutionary action against the colonizers. For Fanon, then, psychic decolonization requires both "a restructuring of the world" (82), and the rejection, by the black man, of the separation imposed on him by white racism. This "combined action" must take place on both the individual and group level, and it must produce changes in both the individual psyche and the social structures that enforce racism (100).

Fanon's crucial intervention here is the linking of the individual psyche to the social and political: the individual is sick because colonial society is sick, and the implications this has for decolonization are profound. The individual must take responsibility for his own illness by recognizing that his illness is a caused by a deeply dysfunctional society, which has convinced him of his own inferiority. Thus, Fanon uses the tools of psychoanalysis to politicize, and thereby heal, his patients who wish to become white; a major step in the process of decolonization. The healing will come from the patient's own recognition that his

motivation to become white is a result of the effects of racist stereotyping on his unconscious, and a decision to abandon his desire to become white.

Fanon interprets the black man's desire for white women as a sign of his inferiority complex, since the desire to sexually possess white women is, he argues, an attempt to become white. One of the ways the black man who has accepted his inferiority attempts to whiten himself, writes Fanon, is through the sexual 'possession' of white women, which is also seen as an initiation into "'authentic manhood.'" Fanon writes: "Talking recently with several Antilleans, I found that the dominant concern among those arriving in France was to go to bed with a white woman. As soon as their ships docked in Le Havre, they were off to the houses. Once this ritual of initiation into 'authentic' manhood had been fulfilled, they took the train for Paris" (72). Fanon differentiates between the "Negro who wants to go to bed with a white woman," and the "Negro" who comes "face to face with his race," arguing that the former clearly has a desire to be white, or at least has a lust for revenge (13-14), while the latter longs simply to be "a man among other men" (112). According to Fanon, the desire to become white through the possession of a white woman is often articulated by the black man as a desire for revenge for the violation of colonialism (72). At the same time, however, this desire cannot be separated from the black man's "inferiority complex," articulated in his desire to become a 'real' or 'authentic' man (72). Through interracial coitus, the black man imagines that he is conquering and debasing the white woman, who, in a racist phallocentric culture, signifies as the property of the white man and a symbol of whiteness itself.

Fanon begins Chapter Three, "The Man of Color and the White Woman," with a highly sexualized description of the desire for white flesh experienced by the black man who wants to be white:

> Out of the blackest part of my soul, across the zebra striping of my mind, surges this desire to be suddenly *white*.
> I wish to be acknowledged not as *black* but as *white*.
> Now . . . who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man.
> I am a white man.
> Her love takes me onto the noble road that leads to total realization . . .
> I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness.
> When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine. (63)

Fanon's description of the desire to be "suddenly *white*" evokes an image of an abrupt transformation from black to white. By articulating this desire as a "[surge]," Fanon implies there is a sense of sexual urgency and power, even violence to the longing. The desire, he writes, emanates "[o]ut of the blackest part of [his] soul" and then "across the zebra striping of [his] mind," insinuating that the urge originates in the subconscious, then travels across the colonized man's 'zebra-striped' mind: a split psyche that conceives of itself as simultaneously black *and* white. According to Fanon, the black man who asks "who but a white woman can acknowledge me as *white* rather than *black*?," and who thinks that if he is loved by a white woman he *is* a white man, exhibits an inferiority complex. He is alienated from both himself and his black brothers by the racism imposed by the colonizers.

The white woman's body becomes, for the black man, a signifier of

Empire, and an object through which he enacts both his personal struggle to become white and, simultaneously, his political struggle for power through revenge. In Fanon's account, the black man's personal and political struggles are intricately connected through sexual intimacy with a white woman. The black man imagines that being loved by a white woman will mean he is acknowledged as a white man, and that he will therefore *be* a white man. Only a white woman can "do this for [him]," because only she can love him "like a white man" is loved. Through a white woman's love, he imagines, he will be liberated from the indignities he suffers as a black man. By sexually possessing a white woman, by "caress[ing] those white breasts," he imagines he "grasp[s] white civilization and dignity." By taking the place of the white man in bed, the black man imagines he is taking the place of the white man in society, and thereby taking his revenge on the white man for the violence blacks have suffered under colonization.

In her analysis of the role of feminine subjectivity in Fanon's theory of black male subject formation, Gwen Bergner focuses on how "colonial identity forms out of the mirroring relation between white men and black men," and fleshes out how "this process is played out through the bodies of women." Both black and white women function, she writes, as mediators "between black men and white men, enabling the differentiation of masculine subject positions according to race" (80). This process, writes Bergner, values women as possessions in a symbolic economy that "produces a hierarchical relation between the groups of men it delineates" (81). Women are, she argues in Luce Irigaray's terms, fetish-objects, "inasmuch as, in exchanges, they are the

manifestation and the circulation of a power of the Phallus, establishing relationships of men with each other" (Bergner 81; Irigaray 183). Fanon's claim that the black man's interracial heterosexual desire signals, simultaneously, a black man's desire for revenge and a desire to be white is, writes Bergner, "an act of both identification with and resistance to the white man" (80).[5] Furthermore, as an act that simultaneously signifies identification and resistance, asserts Bergner, the black man's "[m]anifestly interracial heterosexual desire . . . masks interracial homosocial fear and desire" (80).

In Fanon's account of the black man's desire for white power, the black man *becomes* a white man–in his own eyes, at least–in the moment of sexual conquest. Because he has proven himself worthy of "white love," he has become the white man's equal. The white woman, whose breasts serve as a metaphor for white civilization and dignity, is an object: property to be seized. By grasping "those white breasts," the black man imagines that he is clutching the epitome of white power, of "white beauty, white whiteness." In order for the change from black to white to be more than momentary, however (i.e., last longer than the sexual act itself), the black man needs more than the white woman's love. He needs validation from a white man: "It is essential that some white man say to him, 'Take my sister'" (68). But, as Fanon asserts, the white man will only allow the black man to marry his sister or daughter if he thinks of this black man as an

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[5]This echoes, in disturbing ways, the position of white women in colonial discourse. The violated bodies of white women signified the violation of Empire (white man's property) by native men. What the fetish-object scenario does not account for is the conceptualizing of white femininity existing at the intersection of agency and passivity, and how white women have access

exception: thinks of him as not a *real* 'Negro'. The black man must therefore disavow himself as a black by acquiescing to this impression in order to gain possession of the white woman and thereby be validated as a man. If he refuses to disavow his identity as a black man he will not be allowed to posses the white woman, and will thereby forfeit his ability to gain recognition as an equal to the white man. If he renounces his blackness, he confirms the racist logic that says that educated Negros are not 'real' Negros because "[t]he Negro is a savage"(69). "This procedure is quite familiar to colored students in France," writes Fanon: "Society refuses to consider them genuine Negroes. The Negro is a savage, whereas the student is civilized" (69). The black man who renounces blackness ends up neither black nor white, since although he is not a 'savage,' he will certainly never be considered as an equal to the white man.

Quoting from René Maran's[6] autobiographical novel, *Un Homme Pareil aux Autres*, Fanon outlines an additional dilemma for a black man who desires a white woman. The following words are spoken by the main character, Jean Veneuse, to Andrée Marielle, a French woman he is in love with:

> 'The majority of them [mulattoes and Negroes who migrate to Europe] . . . tend to marry in Europe not so much out of love as for *the satisfaction of being the master of a European woman*; and a certain *tang of proud revenge* enters into this.
>
> And so I wonder whether in my case there is any difference from theirs; whether, by marrying you, who are a European, *I may not appear*

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to power based on hierarchies of race (Sharpe 11-12), an issue I take up in Chapter Four.

[6]René Maran was born in Martinique, received his formal education in France, and was the first black writer to win, in 1921, the distinguished French Literary prize, the Prix Goncourt, for his novel controversial novel *Batouala*.

> *to be making a show of contempt for the women of my own race* and, above all, to be drawn on by desire for that white flesh that has been forbidden to us Negroes as long as white men have ruled the world, *so that without my knowledge I am attempting to revenge myself on a European woman for everything that her ancestors have inflicted on mine* throughout the centuries.' (69-70 my italics)

In citing this passage, Fanon suggests that as long as the structural inequalities caused by racism exist, a black man can never be sure of his motivations for loving a white woman; they remain unconscious. Even if a black man becomes conscious of his unconscious, and has attempted to eliminate the inferiority complex the internalization of stereotypes has caused, a black man who loves a white woman can never be certain that his love is not produced by a desire to be white, and by a desire for revenge.[7]

With the inclusion of the passage outlining Veneuse's dilemma, Fanon also introduces a critique of the gender politics that follow from the black man's desire to gain white privilege through the bodies of white women. The suggestion that black and mulatto men who migrate to Europe and marry white women do so out of a desire to dominate these women raises the problem inherent in employing gender privilege in an attempt to fight racial oppression. In other words, the passage suggests that not only does interracial desire reveal the

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[7] Isaac Julien's biographical film on Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Mask*, suggests that Fanon's marriage to a white French woman may indicate that he excluded himself from his own analysis of the problematic nature of interracial desire under colonialism. While this is something we should consider, his use of first person pronoun throughout *Black Skin, White Masks* suggests that he does not exclude himself from the psychic effects of racism. If this is the case, his marriage to a white woman can be read as a sign of his own deep ambivalence about interracial desire and sexuality. Julien's film does a wonderful job of exploring the idea of Fanon as deeply troubled and conflicted about his own racial and sexual identity, including what Julien portrays as Fanon's ambivalent relationship to homosexuality.

black man's inferiority complex, but the practice of exploiting the white woman's "precarious and unstable subjectivity" (Sharpe 11-12) as a tool of dominance for the black man struggling against colonialism and internalized racism may also be unethical. Another ethical question is raised by Veneuse when he wonders whether 'marrying white' signifies contempt for black women, a gesture that furthers their oppression by confirming the racist logic that constructs them as inferior to white women on racial grounds. The thing that troubles Veneuse "above all," however, is the trouble he has discerning whether his love for Andrée Marielle is genuine, or a product of his desire to dominate a white woman as vengeance for colonial domination by white men. He cannot tell whether he desires Andrée Marielle for herself, or because white women are the forbidden fruit of the colonial encounter.

Fanon's purpose for investigating interracial desire is, he writes, is "to enable the man of color to understand, through specific examples, the psychological elements that can alienate his fellow Negroes" in order, ultimately, "to make possible a healthy encounter between black and white" (79-80). He examines the concept of genuine, or authentic, love at the beginning of Chapter Two, "The Woman of Color and the White Man," saying that he believes in "the possibility of love," which is why he attempts to "trace its imperfections, its perversions" (42). His goal in the two chapters on interracial desire is to "ascertain to what extent authentic love will remain unattainable" before colonized peoples have purged themselves of their feelings of inferiority and their attempts at overcompensation (42). He defines authentic love as: "wishing for

others what one postulates for oneself, when that postulation unites the permanent values of human reality." This, he says, "entails the mobilization of psychic drives basically freed of unconscious conflicts" (41). The unconscious conflicts from which the black man's psychic drives must be freed in order for him to experience 'authentic love' are undoubtedly those that cause him to believe he is inferior to the white man, and compel him to prove himself the white man's equal.

In Fanon's conceptualization of the experience of interracial desire for the colonized black man, then, the act of interracial sex reveals the black man's inferiority complex, reconfirming his status as less than a (white) man. The inability to escape his race becomes explicit through his inability to satisfy his love for a white woman. Fanon calls "the quest for white flesh" a "sexual myth . . . perpetuated by alienated psyches" (81), and says that the black man's desire for white women is a "drama of sexual preoccupation" (72) that thwarts real understanding of his psychological and social condition. Instead of punishing the white man for the violations of colonialism, the black man's desire to possess a white woman reinforces the racial hierarchy that denies his humanity, as well as his 'manhood,' in the terms set out by the colonizer. Within the logic of colonial racism, this attempt at validation through desire for white flesh is always futile, and the very concept of it has, historically, proved extremely dangerous for black and brown men, a fact evident in both lynching and the colonial violence justified

by the discourse of white male chivalry.[8] The black man is always denied validation as a (white) man, and can never enter the phallocentric economy of white patriarchy. His endeavors to achieve recognition from white men are not only futile, but also alienate him from the black community.

The main dilemma for Fanon is the problem interracial desire raises for the integrity of a black man as a black subject, and for a politics of decolonization, rather than in the ethics of using white women as a means to gain access to power.[9] For Fanon, along with exposing his inferiority complex, a black man's desire for white women constitutes an ethical problem largely

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[8] Fanon argues that the white male fantasy of black male sexual potency is a result of the white man's own feelings of impotence or sexual inferiority and has resulted, historically, in punitive and extreme violence against the black man, including castration and lynching. The "Negro," writes Fanon, "is viewed as a penis symbol," and "the lynching of the Negro" is "sexual revenge" for the white man's own inferiority complex: "We know how much of sexuality there is in all cruelties, tortures, beatings. . . Is the Negro's superiority real? Everyone *knows* that it is not. But that is not what matters. The prelogical thought of the phobic has decided that such is the case" (*BSWM* 159).

[9] In response to feminist critiques of Fanon that categorize him as misogynist because of his failure to articulate a feminist politics, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting responds as follows: Fanon was "neither silent on the question of gender . . . nor sexually indifferent. I would argue that his use of masculinist paradigms of oppression and alienation in *Black Skin, White Masks* (or elsewhere) does not importantly posit male superiority. Masculinism is categorically different from antifeminism and misogyny (*Frantz Fanon: Conflicts and Feminisms*, 11). While I agree that *BSWM* exhibits a masculinist rather than misogynist perspective, one might have more difficulty making this distinction when reading certain parts of *Wretched of the Earth*, published eleven years after *BSWM*. In that text Fanon's description of decolonization as a process that requires the violent replacement of the colonizers by the colonized throws into question his earlier objections to revenge through sexual possession of white women as an effective strategy for decolonization. As Karen Okamoto suggests in her unpublished M.A. thesis, Fanon's position on decolonization in *Wretched of the Earth* seems to condone a process of decolonization that involves the replacement of white male dominance by black male dominance, which includes the sexual possession of the white man's wife: "The look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession–all manner of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible" (*Wretched* 39). If read in the context of Fanon's condemnation of interracial sex as a method for possessing whiteness in *Black Skin, White Masks*, however, this passage can be read as a description of a political and psychological strategy rather than an endorsement of this desire. There is also the possibility that Fanon's own thoughts on this changed in the nine years between writing *BSWM* and *Wretched of the Earth*.

because it signals his refusal to come "face to face with his race" (13). Coming face to face with one's race, we might imagine, involves loving black women rather than "making a show of contempt" by marrying a white woman, as Veneuse imagines he might be doing (Maran qtd in Fanon 70). Fanon's "Negro who is driven to discover the meaning of black identity," an identity forced onto him by "[w]hite civilization and European culture," is categorically different from "the Negro" who reveals his "wish to be white" through his desire "to go to bed with a white woman" (13-14). Clearly, Fanon's ethical black man is one who attempts to understand the political effects of colonial racism on his desires, and who acts in ways that liberate him from the effects of this system. Fanon sees blackness and whiteness as differences that are ideologically constructed and materially enforced, and articulates black identity politics as crucial for an effective strategy of decolonization.

As a psychoanalyst, Fanon saw his role as one that would not only help his patient "to become *conscious* of his unconscious and abandon his attempts at a halluncinatory whitening, but also to act in the direction of a change in the social structure" (100). In Fanon's account, interracial relationships signify, in the mind of the black man, as a struggle for power between black and white men. Healthy interracial encounters between black men and white women will only be possible once the black man can ensure that his desire is not motivated, either consciously or unconsciously, by a desire to become white, or as a desire for revenge. And although becoming conscious of the inferiority complex is one step towards its elimination, the material conditions of colonialism must be eradicated

before interracial desire can be experienced as "a healthy encounter between black and white" (80). We can assume that a healthy interracial encounter also requires that the white woman's desire for the black man is not a result of 'Negrophobia,' which Fanon describes as an ambivalent state wherein the white woman simultaneously fears and desires sex with a black man (154-60).[10] It would seem, then, that Fanon's 'genuine' or 'healthy' interracial encounter will remain impossible until the psychic effects of racism are acknowledged and dealt with, and racism has been eradicated in the social structure in which the black man exists. Until then, it remains an indication of his desire for revenge, and his unconscious desire to be white.

Fanon's insights into the processes of ambivalence through which black subjectivity is 'fixed' from without played a formative role in the development of black representational practices that highlight the ambivalence of subjectivity. However, as Stuart Hall suggests, Fanon was himself unable to "live 'politically' with ambivalence," unlike Bhabha, whose work reveals a remarkable ability to accept "a politics of subversion which lives with ambivalence" ("After-Life" 27). Hall attributes Fanon's and Bhabha's different positions on ambivalence to their conflicting theoretical views of the Lacanian 'mirror stage.' Bhabha accepts Lacan's notion that "the split in the subject which the 'mirror phase' engenders . . . is a *general* mechanism of misrecognition which provides the conditions of

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[10]A phobia, notes Fanon (quoting *L'univers morbide de la faute*, 37), "'is a neurosis characterized by the anxious fear of an object . . . or, by extension, of a situation.'" "Naturally," Fanon explains, "that object must have certain aspects. It must arouse . . . both fear and revulsion." (*BSWM* 154).

existence of all identification" (Hall, "After-Life" 26). This view holds that all subjects are always already split, that "'identity is never an *a priori* nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality'" (Bhabha qtd in "After-Life" 26). Fanon, on the other hand, theorizes the mirror stage for blacks under colonialism as a "'pathological' condition, forced on the black subject by colonialism" ("After-Life" 27). The racialized look is what causes the split in the black subject; and this look Fanon insists, "arises from the historically specific, specular structure of racism, not from the general mechanism of self-identification" ("After-Life" 26). As Fanon writes of Freud's, Adler's and Jung's exclusion of the Negro in their research: "they were quite right not to have [considered the Negro]. It is too often forgotten that neurosis is not a basic element of human reality. Like it or not, the Oedipus complex is far from coming into being among Negroes" (*BSWM* 151-52).

The political implications of Fanon's departure from the original Lacanian formula are, says Hall, highly significant to how one goes about the politics of decolonization. Fanon imagines the black subject as whole until split by colonial racism, which suggests the possibility of regaining psychic wholeness once colonialism is eradicated. Bhabha's acceptance of misrecognition as the condition of existence of all identification means that decolonization is always an incomplete process, and that resistance to racism requires a continual 'unfixing' of the discourses that attempt to 'fix', and a continual attention to the ambivalences that produce subjects and their lived experiences. As Hall sees it, the dilemma for contemporary black cultural producers and theorists is to find

ways of combining the insights of both Fanon and Bhabha by holding in some kind of balance "*both* Fanon's spectacular demonstration of the power of the racial binary to *fix*, and Bhabha's equally important and theoretically productive argument that all binary systems of power are nevertheless, *at the same time*, often if not always, troubled and subverted by ambivalence and disavowal" ("After-Life" 26-27). An effective politics of subversion, argues Hall, requires us to "*think together* the overwhelming power of the binary, which persists despite everything in all racially inflected systems of power and representation . . . *and simultaneously* the ambivalences, the openings, the slippages which the suturing of racial discourse can never totally close up" (Hall, "After-life" 27-28). In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, scenes of interracial desire demonstrate Kureishi's ability to "*think together*" both Fanon's insight into the power of the racial binary to 'fix', and Bhabha's notion that all binary systems of power are, simultaneously, "troubled and subverted by ambivalence and disavowal."

A Politics of Subversion: Hybridity, Ambivalence and Interracial Desire in *The Buddha of Suburbia*

As the British-born son of an English mother and a Pakistani father, Kureishi's political and artistic points of view are crucially informed by his own identity as a 'mixed race' Briton, and by the history of both colonial and post-colonial British racism. He is at the forefront of cultural producers who conceive of post-imperial British identity as necessarily diverse, and whose Britishness is consistently thrown into question in contemporary practices of racism. Kureishi

grew up in Britain at the height of national decline and during the rise of 'the new racism'. And as Anuradha Dingwaney Needham argues, it is in the paradox of Kureishi's own personal predicament of being racially abused in a country where he was born that we "can locate his oppositional vision and politics" (114).

In "The Rainbow Sign," a contemplative essay on his experience of growing up in England and his first visit to Pakistan, Kureishi writes about the effect racism had on his subjectivity from an early age: "From the start I tried to deny my Pakistani self. I was ashamed. It was a curse and I wanted to be rid of it. I wanted to be like everyone else" (9). He indicates that his own feelings of not belonging are, in large part, a result of the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion articulated by 'the new racism', which was enforced through the process of racial othering: "I wasn't a misfit; I could join the elements of myself together. It was the others, they wanted misfits; they wanted you to embody within yourself their ambivalence" ("Rainbow" 11). The "others" whose ambivalence he was solicited to embody are the white British who continually labeled him an outsider, excluding him from the category of those who 'belonged' in Britain. This imposition on his own sense of identity, Kureishi suggests, is a product of the ambivalence of whiteness, and its dependence, for existence, on the production of racial others. His reaction to the exclusionary discourse and practice of the 'new racism' was to define himself as *both* British *and* black, challenging the stereotypes that attempted to 'fix' his identity as *either* British *or* black.

In "The Other Question," Homi Bhabha explores the "process of

ambivalence," which is "central to the stereotype," and to the production of white superiority, in colonial discourse, arguing that:

> it is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalisation; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in *excess* of what can be empirically proved or logically construed. ("The Other Question" 18)

In Kureishi's view, the force of ambivalence that produces the stereotype in colonial discourse is alive and well in contemporary Britain. The stereotype of Indians as occupiers of mud huts and riders of camels was imposed on him by a teacher at the age of nine or ten. And he struggled to reconcile this image with his knowledge of his sophisticated Pakistani uncles, who visited him when they were in London on business ("Rainbow" 9). The imposition of stereotypes taught him to be ashamed of his Pakistani heritage, and under the stress of constant racist insults (he reckons that "at least once every day since [he] was five years old [he] had been racially abused ["Rainbow" 12]), he became a "cold and distant" teenager and began to feel "violent" ("Rainbow" 12). Instead of acting out his feelings of violence on the street, however, Kureishi started frequenting libraries ("Rainbow" 13).

During his visits to libraries, Kureishi discovered how black revolutionaries in the United States were fighting racism, sometimes through violent means. He learned about the Black Panther movement, Richard Wright, Muhammed Ali, Malcolm X, the Nation of Islam, and its leader, Elijah Mohammed ("Rainbow" 13). He was drawn to these thinkers and their movements because "they were

fighting" against racism, and, as far as he knew, "no one in England was fighting" ("Rainbow" 13). He soon began to distinguish between these thinkers and what they were advocating, however, and rejected the separatism preached by Elijah Mohammed and his followers. He was disappointed that the men he admired "had liberated themselves only to take to unreason, to the abdication of intelligence" in their submission to Allah (14).

For Kureishi, racism is "Fanon's 'incomprehension'": it is "unreason and prejudice, ignorance and a failure of sense" ("Rainbow" 14). The concepts espoused by Elijah Mohammed and his followers that "the white man [is] innately corrupt, and that "[a]ll whites are devils," was as irrational and prejudiced as racism against blacks and South Asians, and was therefore just as objectionable. His rejection of anti-white sentiment was more than a result of reasoning, however; it was also a result of his material conditions: "I had to live in England, in the suburbs of London, with whites. My mother was white" ("Rainbow" 14). Kureishi found solace in James Baldwin's critique of the black Muslims' turn to Africa and to Islam, which Baldwin thought of as a turning away from the reality of America and an inventing of an ideal and mythical past ("Rainbow" 14). The cover of a Penguin edition of Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* also offered Kureishi a different vision of black masculinity: it was a photo of Baldwin holding his young nephew. For Kureishi, the photo represented Baldwin as "all anger and understanding. He was intelligence and love combined" ("Rainbow" 13).

Like Baldwin, Kureishi eschews anti-racist political strategies that valorize separatism and violence, and elevate one race or culture over another. His early

and daily experiences of racism, and his rejection of separatism and violence as anti-racist strategies, helped Kureishi develop a conceptual framework for dealing with racism whilst living and loving amongst whites. It involved negotiating the binary logic of racism that would place him on one side or the other of the black/white binary, and contributed to his notion of Britishness as an identity that included, rather than excluded, people like him. Ideas about what it means to be British, he argues, have changed since the glory days of Empire and economic stability, when the British characterized themselves as a racially tolerant and gentle mannered people ("Rainbow" 36). Since the loss of their overseas Empire, argues Kureishi, the idea British whites had of themselves as gentle-mannered and tolerant have been put to "the test," and British identity has become a much "more complex thing" ("Rainbow" 37-38). But while British people of colour already know that "being British" has changed radically, writes Kureishi, British whites have yet to accept this fact:

> It is the British, the white British, who have to learn that being British isn't what it was. Now it is a more complex thing, involving new elements. . . . Much thought, discussion and self-examination must go into seeing . . . what this 'new way of being British' involves and how difficult it might be to attain. ("Rainbow" 38)

Kureishi himself has put much thought and self-examination into representing what this 'new way of being British' might involve, and as Needham points out, he perceives the reformulation of Britishness as an "ethical necessity" (114). Kureishi meets the ethical challenge of articulating a new way of "being British," Needham writes, by advocating "intermixtures and hybridity" against "the demand for a pure (white) British subject" (121). "What that intermix means, writes

Kureishi, "its moral quality, whether it is violently resisted by ignorant whites and characterized by inequality and injustice, or understood, accepted and humanized, is for all of us to decide" ("Rainbow 38).

In scenes where, in Kureishi's words, "a black and white couple are screwing" ("Interview" 53), we get a sense of what Kureishi's search for what the "moral quality" of the reformulation of Britishness as intermixtures and hybridity involves. In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, we see what this reformulation looks like through the eyes of Karim, a self-interested, "restless and easily bored" teenager, looking for a way out of the suburbs and into London, "where life was bottomless in its temptations" (*Buddha* 3, 8). Through scenes where Karim expresses and experiences interracial desire, Kureishi presents readers with a representation of the negotiations involved in "a whole complex of social arrangements," including "color, class, and relations between the sexes" ("Interview" 53). As representations that signify the transgression of racial, sexual and class boundaries, these scenes act as productive sites for Karim's negotiation of the various binaries that attempt to 'fix' his identity, and thereby reveal many of the contradictions of black experience. By reading for the ways Karim negotiates the intimate world of interracial desire in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, we also get a deeper understanding of how he challenges regimes of racial and national purity by advocating intermixtures and hybridity. Additionally, representations of interracial desire in the novel challenge notions of sexual and emotional purity, which are reinforced by Fanon's focus on heterosexual interracial desire and his vision of 'authentic love'.

Much of the literary criticism on *The Buddha of Suburbia* focuses largely on the novel's relationship to realist conventions, and on Kureishi's exceptional ability to represent the many contradictions that must be negotiated by second-generation British-Asians as they come of age in contemporary Britain.[11] Kureishi is explicit about his commitment to representing black British experience as highly complex, arguing that this cannot be done by presenting only 'positive' images of the black community:

> If there is to be a serious attempt to understand Britain today, with its mix of races and colours, its hysteria and despair, then, writing about it has to be complex. It can't apologise or idealise. It can't sentimentalise and it can't represent only one group as having a monopoly on virtue. (Kureishi, "Dirty Washing," 26)

In *Buddha,* Kureishi has undoubtedly accomplished his desire to write the black British experience as complex, without apologies or idealizations. And as Berthold Schoene writes, Karim is a character who is "unidentifiable within the framework of binarist discourse." He is "an intrinsically polycultural subject who has internalized, and now exudes, a multitude of cultural differences,

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[11]Bart Moore-Gilbert, for instance, places the novel squarely within the conventions of "British social realism," and explains how *Buddha* uses these conventions to "[argue] persistently that identity is constructed, multiply-determined, mixed, provisional and relational" (195, 202). Another critic, Berthold Schoene, argues that *Buddha* appropriates and alters conventions of "Victorian realism" as a method of "challenging common western strategies of framing and directing individual as well as communal identities" (118). Kureishi uses the realist mode of *Bildungsroman*, Schoene writes, to represent Karim's struggle to free himself "of society's restrictive frame of *Bildung* and its manipulative power of inscription" (119). But unlike classical *Bildungsroman* characters, who remain "essentially identical with whom they were at the outset" (118), he argues, the traditional concept of 'identity' is revealed as completely inadequate to Karim, who "refuses to be accommodated anywhere for certain" (120). Though these critics disagree about which particular mode of realism *Buddha* employs and/or appropriates, they do agree on the novel's ability to represent the contradictions inherent in black British experience. This suggests that Kureishi has successfully commandeered conventions of literary realism to represent these contradictions and complexities, a feat that critics in the mid-1980s saw as difficult, if not impossible, in the field of cinematic realism (Mercer, "Busy" 23-25; Henriques 19).

deconstructively proliferating identities beyond restrictive binary oppositions whilst remaining ultimately indeterminate himself" (Schoene 120-21).[12] Not only does Kureishi's portrayal of Karim deconstruct the binary opposites that restrict his racial identity, but it also deconstructs the binary logic of both sexism and homophobia that are evident in Fanon's work, and which form the interior limits of decolonization. And Kureishi achieves this challenge to the interior limits of decolonization, I argue, specifically through his representations of interracial desire in the novel.

Like Fanon's colonial Negro who finds himself in Europe and "has been given two frames of reference within which he has had to place himself" (*BSWM* 110), Karim Amir must struggle to "place himself" within the frames of Indian and British identity, where Indians are reviled as "Paki's" and 'authentic' British subjects are 'white'. The main conflict for René Maran's character in *Un Homme Pareil aux Autres*, writes Fanon, is that he is *both* European, *and* black: "[Jean Veneuse] is a Negro. Born in the Antilles, he has lived in Bordeaux for years; so he is a European. But he is black; so he is a Negro" (64). In the first three sentences of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, we are introduced to Kureishi's protagonist, and to his similar predicament of being given "two frames of reference" within which he must place himself:

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[12]For others who have written about the character of Karim in similar terms, see: Nahem Yousaf, "Hanif Kureishi and 'the Brown Man's Burden" and *Hanif Kureishi's The Buddha of Suburbia*; Lee Yu-cheng, "Cultural Politics in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*"; Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, *Using the Master's Tools: Resistance and the Literature of the African and South-Asian Diasporas.*

> My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories. But I don't care – Englishman I am (though not proud of it), from the South London suburbs and going somewhere. (3)

Born in Britain in the 1960s, the son of an Indian father and white British mother, Karim is *both* Indian *and* English. Like Veneuse, he is a product of "two old histories" that are inextricably entwined by colonialism. Neither Veneuse nor Karim feels that he belongs on one side or the other of the dividing lines of black/white, other/European; yet each must negotiate his identity within and between the binary logic of racism that consistently 'fixes' him as racial other in a white supremacist culture. By positioning Karim as an "almost" Englishman, "a funny kind of Englishman, and "a new breed," Kureishi establishes Karim's difficult and ambivalent relationship to the British nation and his struggle to construct his subjectivity within a racist culture that continuously tries to 'fix' him as Indian other.

Through Karim's description of the ambivalent nature of his desire for Elinor, an upper middle-class white woman he falls in love with, Kureishi invokes Fanon's image of the black male colonial subject's desire to possess whiteness: "And we pursued English roses as we pursued England; by possessing these prizes, this kindness and beauty, we stared defiantly into the eye of the Empire and all its self-regard . . . We became part of England and yet proudly stood outside it" (227). Like Fanon's colonial black man who imagines that when his "hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them [his]" (*BSWM* 63), Karim imagines the white woman's body as a

symbol of England itself. His desire to "possess" England by "possessing" these "English roses" is motivated by his desire to defy Empire's oppressive power over him, while simultaneously making him "part" of the English nation. Karim wishes to "free" himself "from all bitterness and resentment," but wonders how "this is possible when bitterness and resentment were generated afresh every day" through a "look, a remark, an attitude" that told him he was inferior to the white British (227). In this passage, Kureishi draws a parallel between Karim's experiences of racism in 1970s Britain to colonial racism, and suggests that his desire for Elinor is a response to the same racist conditions. Like Fanon's black colonized man whose interracial desire signals his ambivalent desire to enact revenge on whites, and to be white himself, Karim's desire for Elinor reveals his ambivalent desire to simultaneously identify with England and remain separate from it. Unlike Fanon's black man who has yet to become conscious of the ways racism has affected his psyche and motivated his desires, however, Karim is acutely aware of how the daily acts of racism he experiences precipitate his desire to defy England through the possession of English 'roses'.

In a earlier passage Kureishi links Karim's desire to sexually 'possess' white women to anti-colonial struggle by suggesting that he has inherited this desire from his Indian father. And he associates the act of interracial sex with acts of colonial and anti-colonial violence:

> I remember my father saying drunkenly to the Mayor . . . 'We little Indians love plump white women with fleshy thighs.' *Perhaps I was living out his dreams as I embraced Eleanor's flesh*, as I ran the palms of my hands lightly over her whole body, then kissed her awake and popped by tongue into her cunt as she opened her eyes. Half asleep, we'd love each other,

> but disturbing images would sometimes enter my head. Here we were, a fond and passionate pair, but to reach climax I found myself wondering what creatures men were that saw rapes, massacres, tortures, eviscerations at such moments of union. I was being tormented by devils. I kept feeling that terrible things would happen. (207 my italics)

Karim's speculation about whether or he is "living out [his father's] dreams" as he makes love to Elinor suggests that his sexual desire for white women is an internalization of his father's desires. This connects his own longings for white women to those of his colonized forefathers, and suggests that he is becoming conscious of his unconscious desires. By describing Karim's use of disturbing thoughts to reach orgasm, the passage also suggests that interracial sex causes Karim a certain amount of anxiety, which is produced by the recollection of both colonial and anti-colonial violence. Kureishi's suggestion that violence is an element of interracial desire also raises questions about the ethical nature of using white women's bodies as objects through which the black man violates colonial authority.

In her analysis of the British colonial discourse of white male chivalry, Jenny Sharpe argues that "the circulation of the violated bodies of English women [served] as a sign for the violation of colonialism," and surfaced as a strategy to manage the crisis in British authority during the 1857 Indian uprisings (4). "During the 1857 revolt," writes Sharpe, "the idea of rebellion was so closely imbricated with the violation of English womanhood that the Mutiny was remembered [by the English] as a barbaric attack on innocent white women" (2). And, as I outlined in the introduction, narratives that constructed Indian men, particularly Muslims, as rapists of English 'ladies', became commonplace, while

English men were cast as the rescuers and avengers of defenseless white women, and the British military's "campaign of terror" against the Indian population was thus rationalized as a fitting response (Sharpe 6). Karim's feeling that "terrible things would happen" as a result of his sexual union with Eleanor invoke the memory of revenge meted out by British soldiers on Indians in the name of punishing Indians for the alleged violation of hundreds of British women.[13] By evoking the violent images used to construct Indian men as rapists of English women, and the campaign of terror against Indians that this narrative tried to justify, Kureishi shows how the colonial past haunts the relations between Indian men and English women in the present, and raises difficult questions about the role of violence in interracial sexual relations.

Karim's recognition of how the "disturbing images" of violence that flash through his mind during intercourse heightens his own sexual enjoyment suggests that, as Julien points out, "one's ambivalence . . . isn't found so much in polemic, in what one says, as in one's fantasies, in one's desires . . . all these different repressions and oppressions are reinscribed in the psyche" ("States of Desire" 127). Karim's fantasies of "rapes, massacres, tortures, eviscerations at such moments of [interracial] union" signals Kureishi's attempt to expose the most troubling and complex aspects of the effects of colonial and racist discourses as they relate to interracial sexuality. As outlined above, Fanon

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[13]Jenny Sharpe points out that those Magistrates commissioned to investigate eyewitness reports "could find no evidence to substantiate the rumors of rebels raping, torturing, and mutilating English women" (*Allegories of Empire* 2).

cautions against interracial relationships until such a time as the black man's "psychic drives [are] basically freed of unconscious conflicts," at which time, he projects, "authentic love" will become possible (*BSWM* 41-42). By representing Elinor and Karim as "a fond and passionate pair" while simultaneously acknowledging that Karim's fondness and passion are charged by fantasies of violence, Kureishi confirms Fanon's concept of the ambivalence of interracial desire for the black man. However, Kureishi does not posit abandoning interracial relationships until such a time as racism is abolished, ambivalence disappears, and Fanon's "authentic love" becomes possible. Instead, he represents the moments in which the ambivalence of interracial desire becomes evident as moments when Karim becomes aware of "the repertoire of positions of power and resistance, domination and dependence" that construct him as a racialized subject (Bhabha 18). As moments that reveal the intricate workings of power relations, they open up spaces in which new modes of resistance can be developed. They provide, in other words, opportunities for acting in ways that subvert, rather than reinforce, the binary oppositions that attempt to 'fix' the black subject as racialized other and trap him into acting out in stereotypical ways.

As Sharpe argues, white womanhood functioned as an "important cultural signifier for articulating a colonial hierarchy of race" for the British (4). By drawing attention to Karim's use of Helen, a white girl from his high school, as a tool of revenge against her racist father, Kureishi draws attention to how white femininity can be appropriated by black men in an attempt to reverse the hierarchy of race. In Karim's working-class suburban neighborhood, racism takes the clear and

violent form of racist attacks and name-calling. Karim is fed up with school: sick of abuse by teachers and "sick too of being affectionately called Shitface and Curryface, and of coming home covered in spit and snot and chalk and woodshavings" (63). When he calls on Helen at home he is confronted with her father, "a big man with a black beard and thick arms" who Karim dubs "Hairy Back" (39-40). Helen's father clearly situates himself as a Powellite racist, casting Karim as a threat to racial purity and a target of violence in his articulation of the miscegenation taboo:

> 'You can't see my daughter again' said Hairy Back. 'She doesn't go out with boys. Or with wogs . . . We don't want you blackies coming to the house . . . However many niggers there are, we don't like it. We're with Enoch. If you put one of your black 'ands near my daughter I'll smash it with a 'ammer!' (40)

After Karim is threatened with violence and reminded of the prohibition against interracial mixing he experiences "a delicious moment of revenge" when Helen uses Hairy Back's car to pick his childhood friend Jamila's husband-to-be up at the airport: "Had [Hairy Back] known that four Pakis were resting their dark arses on his deep leather seats, ready to be driven by his daughter, who had only recently been fucked by one of them, he wouldn't have been a contented man" (78). While Karim takes pleasure in the thought that his temporary possession of Hairy Back's property–his car and his daughter–signifies as sweet revenge, the fact is that Hairy Back does *not* know about Karim's 'possession' of his 'property'. Thus, the strategy of enacting revenge through the bodies of white women is revealed as ineffective, as it only signifies as an act against racism in Karim's mind, where it reinforces the binary structures of racism that 'fix' him as racial

other and enable Hairy Back to denigrate him in the first place.

Towards the end of the novel, Karim becomes aware of how the desire to possess whiteness by possessing white women can destroy the black subject. When Eleanor tells Karim she loves him, but will continue the affair she has started with Pyke (the white male director of the play they both act in), Karim "resolve[s] to break with Eleanor," remembering what happened to her last black lover, Sweet Gene. As Karim tells us: "Sweet Gene "killed himself because every day, by a look, a remark, an attitude, the English told him they hated him; they never let him forget they thought him a nigger, a slave, a lower being" (227). If we read Sweet Gene's attempts to "become part of England" by "pursuing English roses" in Fanonian terms, his desire for white women signals his acceptance of the separation imposed on him by being continuously *fixed* from the outside by the gaze of the white other. Sweet Gene's suicide symbolizes both his acceptance of the racist myth of black inferiority, and his realization that his attempts to pursue belonging by 'possessing' white women will consistently fail. His obliteration as a subject also signifies the psychic violence imposed by the manichean structure of racism that denies the humanity of those who cannot signify as white subjects.

In light of Sweet Gene's suicide, Karim's resolution to "break with Eleanor" instead of sharing her with Pyke can be read as a practice of psychic self-preservation. When forced to compete with Pyke for Elinor's affections, Karim withdraws from the relationship, signaling a refusal to engage in the power struggle with the white man and be slowly obliterated like Sweet Gene. Karim's

transgression of racial boundaries is informed by his awareness of the dynamics of the power struggle between black and white men, which empowers him to consciously negotiate the racial binaries that attempt to 'fix' his identity. As long as his relationship with Elinor reinforces his ability to transgress the binaries that threaten to 'fix' him as racialized other, it affirms his sense of who he is. But when he recognizes that a power struggle with Pyke over Elinor makes him vulnerable to the 'fixing' powers of the racial binary, he chooses to leave the relationship, even though it leaves him feeling "nothing" for quite awhile after (228).

As Needham suggests, the "making of the hybrid self" means that Karim must seek out and embrace "those parts of himself that connect him with his (thus far repressed or ignored) subordinated or minority identity in Britain" (121). Initially, however, Karim incorporates aspects of his Indian heritage into his own performance of identity for strictly utilitarian reasons: to escape working-class life in the suburbs. He learns this strategy from his father Haroon, who after years of "trying to be more of an Englishman," was now "exaggerating his Indian accent" and cultivating an identity as an Eastern spiritual guru (21). Haroon soon leaves his working-class white wife, Karim's mother, for Eva, a middle-class white woman who facilitates his rise to middle class social status by cultivating his racial 'exoticism'. Karim acknowledges that cultivating this exoticism means turning himself into an object for the white gaze when he first meets Eva, who, "holding [him] at arm's length as if [he] were a coat she was about to try on . . . looked [him] all over and said, 'Karim Amir, you are so exotic, so original!" (9).

When Haroon leaves Karim's mother, Karim moves in with his father and Eva, who are on their way out of the suburbs and into London proper. And this is where Karim first meets Eleanor, who, like Eva, helps to facilitate his own "social rise" (174).

As a member of the upper-middle class, Eleanor could afford to "[conceal] her social origins," and "she took her 'connections' for granted" (173). Spending time around "Elinor's crowd," Karim realizes that "[th]e easy talk of art, theatre, architecture, travel; the languages, the vocabulary, knowing the way round a whole culture – it was invaluable and irreplaceable capital" (177). In Elinor's world, Karim finds out that racism and classism play themselves out through the exotification of both the racial and working-class other. While Haroon's guru act works to attract Eva, Karim's working-class status marks him as exotic other for Eleanor, who, to Karim's surprise, considers his South London accent "cute" (178). When Eleanor tells Karim this he "practically stopped talking at all, [his] voice choking in [his] throat":

> 'What accent?' I managed to say. 'The way you talk, it's great.' 'But what way do I talk?' She looked at me impatiently, as if I were playing some ridiculous game, until she saw I was serious. 'You've got a street voice, Karim. You're from South London–so that's how you speak . . . It's not unusual. It's different to my voice, of course.' Of course. At that moment I resolved to lose my accent . . . I would speak like her." (178)

This incident makes Karim realize that to get ahead amongst the middle-class he must cultivate his 'exoticness' as an Indian, but that his 'exoticness' as a South Londoner, though part of his exotic appeal to Eleanor, will hold him back from gaining invaluable cultural capital amongst her crowd. As he sheds his South

London accent, he also sheds the stories of his past, since "[his] past wasn't important enough, wasn't as substantial as [Eleanor's], so [he'd] thrown it away" (178).

As Karim 'throws away' the markers of his class origins, he continues to cultivate his performances as 'exotic' Indian, which gains him success in the theatre, but at the cost of becoming a sexual object for Pyke and his wife. In an exchange that explicitly represents how women circulate as fetish objects between men, Pyke offers Karim his wife as a "present." Delighted with Karim's development of an Indian character for their play, Pyke tells Karim: "'Hey, you should know I'm pleased with your contribution to the show. The character you've got going is going to be a big laugh. So I've decided to give you a very special present . . . It's Marlene. . . If you want her, she's yours. She wants you'" (191). Karim "wasn't flattered," but because of Pyke's power over his acting career, Karim replies: "'I've never been so flattered in my life. It's incredible'" (192). What he does not realize is that the invitation involves group sex with Eleanor, Pyke and Marlene, which he has not exactly consented to. As Karim and Marlene are having sex, Pyke approaches them, and before Karim knows it, "England's most interesting and radical theatre director was inserting his cock between [Karim's] speaking lips." Karim's response is understated, especially given that the image can be read as a metaphor for the white man's violent silencing of brown men through centuries of colonial and racist oppression: "I could appreciate the privilege [of performing fellatio on Pyke], but I didn't like it much: it seemed an imposition. He could have asked politely" (203). Pyke's offer

of his wife, which began as an exchange of a woman between men, backfires on Karim, and he becomes an object of exchange between Pyke and his wife. This scenario shows how white women and black men are both vulnerable to objectification in a racist and sexist culture, and further destabilizes the notion that black men can gain access to whiteness through the bodies of white women.

Later that night, as Karim puts it, Pyke had "fucked [him] up the arse while Marlene cheered [them] on," and he's sure that Pyke is "fucking [him] in other ways" as well (219). Moore-Gilbert interprets "Pyke's buggary of Karim" as an "an allegory of neo-colonial relations," as well as a "representation of the colonial relationship" between Britain and India (199). In addition, the scene suggests that although there are historical and political differences in how racism effects racialized subjects at different times and in different places, the binary structure of racism ensures that it is the white man who retains control over the black. It also shows how patriarchy and racism work together to oppress both blacks and women. Fanon asserts that the colonized black man who desires a white woman's love needs validation from a white man who says "'Take my sister.'" Because the white man will only perform this validating act if he thinks of the black man as an exception, not a *real* 'Negro,' the black man must disavow his blackness (*BSWM* 68-69). In Karim's case, however, Pyke's validation depends on Karim's performance of the 'exotic' Indian: he must disavow the 'white' part and play up his Indianness, which he also does on stage as an actor.

Needham argues that by performing his "subordinated or minority identity," the part of himself "which dominant British culture reviles, and which

revulsion he has internalized," Karim slowly gains knowledge about and becomes comfortable with the "reviled 'Paki' identity" (Needham 121, 123). Eventually, Karim learns how to use this role-playing to deconstruct the category of exotic other, even as he uses it to get ahead as an actor. In his performance of Mowgli (from Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*), during which the director forced him to "wear a loin-cloth and brown make-up" and speak in an "Indian accent" in order to signify as 'authentically' Indian (146-47), Karim "made the audience laugh by suddenly relapsing into cockney at odd times" (158). Cockney is an English dialect and identity originating in the East End of London amongst the white working class. And, as Paul Gilroy notes, although "many of London's working-class blacks were Cockney by birth and experience (technical Cockneys), their 'race' denied them access to the social category established by the language which real (i.e. white) Cockneys spoke" (195). By breaking into Cockney while performing the role of exotic racial other, Karim simultaneously deconstructs the 'authenticity' of the Indian character he is playing and the 'authenticity' of Cockney as a white only identity, revealing the ambivalence of both race and class binaries at once.

By self-consciously creating what he calls "the additional personality bonus of an Indian past" (213), and by noticing and exposing the social markers of class, Karim performs a masculine subjectivity that demonstrates cultural hybridity. Through this hybrid subjectivity, which also signifies as a political identity, argues Needham, both Karim and Kureishi can "securely, and with integrity . . . endorse the claims of a genuinely multicultural, multiracial society"

(121). In this way, Kureishi posits the performance of hybrid identity as a challenge to notions of British national purity, in terms of both race and class. This strategy can be read as a challenge to Fanon's idea that psychic decolonization can only be realized once the black subject achieves a sense of himself as a 'unified' or 'whole' subject unsplit by the ambivalences of racism. By highlighting how race and class work together to delineate identity, and by positing cultural hybridity as a strategy of resistance, Kureishi shows how Fanon's insight into the power of the racial binary to 'fix' can be used to 'unfix' racial binaries through a politics of subversion that reveals the ambivalence inherent in multiple binary systems of power.

Perhaps the most compelling and significant way Kureishi's novel develops Fanon's ideas about black male subjectivity and decolonization is through its representation of Karim's sexual desire for Charlie, Eva's blond, popular and rebellious teenage son. In a scene where Karim and Helen make love, Kureishi again makes the mediating function of the white woman explicit. But this time, he also suggests that Karim's desire for Helen masks interracial homosocial fear and desire, and indicates that Karim's and Helen's desire for each is erotically charged by their mutual desire for Charlie: "Helen and I climbed into Anerley Park and lay down on our backs on the grass by the swings, and looked at the sky, and pulled our clothes down. It was a good fuck, but hurried, as Hairy Back would be getting anxious. I wondered if we were both thinking of Charlie as we did it" (77). By revealing that Karim is thinking of Charlie while making love to Helen, Kureishi reiterates Fanon's notion that the black man's

desire for the white woman betrays his desire for white power, and exposes Helen's role in the symbolic economy of exchange between men. By suggesting that Helen might also be thinking of Charlie as she makes love with Karim, Kureishi also implies that Karim is a substitute for Helen's desire for Charlie, and that Helen's interracial desire for Karim masks her relationship of fear and desire to white masculinity. This implicates white women in the exchange for white male power, and implies that although black men and white women occupy different positions in relation to white masculinity, they face similar challenges as they negotiate for power in the nexus of race and gender politics.

Another way to think about this point is to consider how sexual and racial differences are articulated together by representing what Mercer calls that "ambiguous realm where different differences intersect" ("Busy" 16). As categories of raced and gendered identity, black masculinity and white femininity are connected through their 'different differences' from the category of white masculinity. Black men occupy the category of superior sex and inferior race, while white women occupy the category of inferior sex and superior race. Both positions are highly tenuous, though, since black men who deviate from normative masculinity risk categorization as feminine or homosexual, and white women who transgress racial boundaries risk categorization as racially impure. Neither black men nor white women have access to white male power or privilege, but for different reasons. If we push this a little further, we can see how a coalition politics between black men and white women could be formed by consciously rejecting privilege, and thereby highlighting the connections between

their mutual exclusion from the privileged category of white masculinity.

As I noted in the Introduction, a coalition politics of this type was formed by white women and black men in the early 1970s in London. They developed political alliances across racial lines, practicing a form of solidarity not premised on identity and sameness, but rather on commonality and connection. This practice can, write Vron Ware and Les Back, "open up new insights into patterns of social and political injustice," which can in turn "lead to different kinds of alliances dedicated to combating" injustice in multiple realms (7, 151). As Remi Kapo argues, however, many black men rejected this practice of transgressing racial taboos as an anti-racist strategy, preferring instead to signify black solidarity and "unity against whites" by refusing to "'go with a white'" woman (Kapo 69). This strategy of separatism coincides more closely with Fanon's vision of decolonization, which advocates the avoidance of interracial relationships until such a time as the ambivalences caused by colonial racism are eradicated (*BSWM* 13). Fanon's separatist strategy stems from his rejection of the Lacanian concept of identity that sees the conditions of existence for any identity as grounded in a split in the subject; a split that occurs during the 'mirror phase'.

As noted above, Fanon rejects this concept, arguing that black subjectivity is unsplit until exposed to colonial racism. This view excludes the possibility that one's identity can be split by the enforcement of gender binaries, or other oppressive systems that threaten to 'fix' a person's subjectivity and alienate him or her from a unified self image. And although Fanon had great insight into the

processes of ambivalence through which colonial subjectivity is 'fixed' by the racist look, he was, as Hall says, unable to "live 'politically' with ambivalence" ("After-Life" 27). Contrary to Fanon's inability to live politically with ambivalence, Kureishi posits living with ambivalence as an alternative mode of resistance. He continuously exposes the ambivalences that form subjectivity and presents Karim as a subject who stands firmly at sites where ambivalence flourishes as a way to free himself from the binaries that threaten to 'fix' his identity. For Karim, interracial desire exposes the ambivalences imposed by binary systems of oppression, and functions as a method of revealing commonalities and connections amongst those who experience oppression based on their racial, class, gender or sexual identity.

Another area of ambivalence that Fanon could not live with, either psychically or politically, is evident in his disavowal of homosexuality in the Antilles. Mercer reads Fanon's contradictory claim that he could establish "no overt presence of homosexuality in Martinique," and that the "'men dressed like women'" he has seen there "lead normal [i.e., heterosexual] sex lives" (Fanon 180 fn44), as a symptom of "homophobic fixation and disavowal." Homophobic fixation and disavowal, argues Mercer, are omnipresent in "the political economy of masculinity in black liberationist discourse," and form the "the interior limits of decolonisation" within black liberation politics ("Decolonisation" 125, 128). Isaac Julien argues that "[t]he out black snow queen draws attention to the fact of black desire for the white subject and contests pathologised racial identities," which are "the products of Afrocentric readings" (82). In *Buddha*, Kureishi draws attention

to the fact of black desire for the white subject and depathologises Karim's racial identity when he explicitly queers Karim's desire for Charlie. By outing Karim as a snow queen, Kureishi unmasks what Julien identifies as Western culture's fetishization of whiteness: "in this Western culture we have all grown up as snow queens–straights, as well as white queers. Western culture is in love with its own (white) image" (82).

By representing Karim's sexual desire for Charlie as firmly rooted in a desire to *be* Charlie, to have "[Charlie's] talents, face, style . . . all transferred to [him]" (15), Kureishi represents Karim's same-sex desire for Charlie as inseparable from his desire to *be* white. And when Karim describes Charlie as the epitome of white male beauty in terms that call to mind a Nazi definition of Aryan features, Kureishi suggests that this love of whiteness, especially of white masculinity, is both troubling and ubiquitous: "[Charlie] was a boy upon whom nature had breathed such beauty -- his nose was so straight, his cheeks so hollow, his lips such rosebuds." Charlie is *so* beautiful, Karim exaggerates, that he is sexually desirable to absolutely everyone who sees him: "[w]omen sighed in his presence" and "[m]en and boys got erections just being in the same room as him; for others the same effect was had by being in the same country" (9). Kureishi's use of humor and hyperbole to situate Charlie as a symbol of the seductive power of white masculinity draws attention the absurd nature of Western culture's obsession with white masculinity, while simultaneously suggesting that it is something which everyone–men, women, blacks, whites, straights, queers–desires for him/her self.

Kureishi's representation of Karim as a 'snow queen' goes further than simply unmasking Western culture's love of whiteness, however. By queering Karim's desire for Charlie, Kureishi takes black male sexual desire for white men out of the closet which, according to Mercer, "is one of the most crowded rooms in the house of black diaspora" ("Decolonisation" 128). As noted above, Bergner asserts that masculine subject positions are differentiated according to race, and that women's bodies are used to mediate the circulation of the power of the phallus between black and white men. She also observes that in Fanon's conception of colonial identity, "interracial heterosexual desire . . . masks interracial homosocial fear and desire" (80). By representing Karim's desire for whiteness as sexual desire for Charlie himself, Kureishi does away with the mediating exchange of women and thereby unmasks interracial homosocial fear and desire. Moreover, because it queers Karim's desire for whiteness, Kureishi's novel confronts what Mercer describes as "the pervasive presence of homophobia in *Black Skin, White Masks*" ("Decolonisation" 123), revealing one of the most prevalent interior limits of the politics of decolonization.

The Buddha of Suburbia confronts the homophobia of Fanon's text most explicitly in a scene that depicts interracial sex between Karim and Charlie. Karim has just witnessed his father and Eva making love for the first time in Eva's backyard, and he has returned to Charlie's room where they were smoking pot and listening to music. As they lay together on Charlie's bed, Karim "laid [his] hand on Charlie's thigh," and when Charlie began to get an erection, Karim "began to feel confident" and "dashed for his belt, for his fly, for his cock" (17).

This is not Karim's first sexual experience with another boy, but he explicitly and self-consciously queers his desire for whiteness by setting this encounter apart from his schoolboy experiences of 'squeezing,' 'stroking,' 'rubbing' and 'pinching' other boys at school: "I had never kissed a man" before, he says, but "I tried to kiss [Charlie]. He avoided my lips by turning his head to one side. But when he came in my hand it was, I swear, one of the preeminent moments of my earlyish life" (17). Karim's direct grasping of the white man's penis eliminates the white woman as an object of exchange between black and white men. By describing the moment when Charlie ejaculates in Karim's hand as "one of the preeminent moments" in Karim's life, Kureishi suggests that Karim has, at least momentarily, gained direct access to white power by taking control of the phallus, revealing yet another site of ambivalence in the binary structure of racist discourse.

The image of Karim taking control of the white man's phallus corresponds with David Marriott's contention that the "intense sexualization of racial politics in colonial and post-colonial societies" indicates that "nobody can actually 'own' the phallus." And it shows that the constant struggle for phallic power between black and white men is an indication of "the failure of the white man's hegemonic symbolization of the ownership of the phallus" (194). As possessions in the symbolic economy of colonial masculinity, women are excluded from positions of power and authority. But, as Mercer points out, "the problem of the phallus - who owns it, who lacks it - nevertheless remains an issue for homosocial institutions," including black nationalist movements that violently re-inscribe homophobia and misogynistic positions in their projection of "an authentically black identity"

("Decolonisation" 124-125, 128). Julien argues that "[t]he upholding of an essential black identity" that underwrites black nationalist discourse "is dependent upon an active avoidance of the psychic reality of black/white desire" ("Confessions" 82). Only by insisting on "the *fact* of interracial desire, its very transgression of racial boundaries," writes Julien, can black desire for the white subject be 'depathologized' (Julien, "Confessions" 82, my italics).

Julien's concept of depathologizing black desire for the white subject does not mean denying the oppressive function of the fetishization of whiteness. Rather, I would argue, it means taking the focus off the individual as pathological, and developing a strong strategy of resistance to cultural narratives that reinforce oppressive practices of exclusion based on race, gender and sexuality. In this way Julien does for the sexual politics of decolonization what Fanon does for the racial politics of decolonization, i.e., he takes the focus off the individual as subject of pathology and situates the pathology itself as a product of the discursive system by which the subject is formed. Depathologizing black desire for the white subject posits the transgression of sexual and racial lines as a strategy for resisting the "interior limits of decolonisation" within black liberation politics. Homophobia and sexism comprise these interior limits, and are, to repeat Mercer's argument here, "repressed" and "unspoken in the black liberation narrative," but nonetheless reveal themselves in the form of "symptom" ("Decolonisation" 121-22). The crossing of racial and sexual lines, writes Julien, "causes anxiety, undermines the binary notions of self/other, black/white, straight/queer" ("Black is, Black Ain't" 75), and draws attention to these interior

limits to contest pathologized racial identities ("Confessions" 82).

Read in the context of the interior limits of decolonization, Karim's grasping of the phallus is more than simply an indication of his desire for white power. Karim's 'outing' of himself as a 'snow queen' is also an act of resistance to the pathologization of interracial queer desire. By drawing attention to the *fact* of black male desire for the white male subject, Kureishi effectively contests the pathologization of queer black masculinity, which is depicted in the novel by Haroon's reaction to Karim's tryst with Charlie: "'I saw you, Karim. My God, you're a bloody pure shitter! A bum-banger! My own son – how did it transpire? (18). Karim's sexual desire for Charlie threatens Haroon's concept of normative masculinity, and his hostility gives Karim a chance to point out the ambivalences in Haroon's own performance of male subjectivity, and draw attention to the problems with his father's particular choices.

In response to Haroon's accusations that Karim's attraction to Charlie is abnormal, Karim imitates the voice Haroon used during his 'buddha' performance to denaturalize and de-essentialize Haroon's performance of 'exotic' Eastern masculinity: "'Relax, Dad. Relax your whole body from your fingers to your toes and send your mind to a quiet garden where–'" (18). With this reference to "a quiet garden," Karim lets his father know that he is aware of his extra-marital affair with Eva. And his mimicking of Haroon's voice is meant to humiliate his father by revealing Karim's knowledge that Haroon's 'buddha' performance is a sham. Haroon reacts to these counter-attacks by pathologizing Karim's desire for Charlie, invoking the medical profession as arbiter and

enforcer of sexual normativity: "I'll send you to a fucking doctor to have your balls examined!'" he yells (18).

Ultimately, Karim falls out of love with Charlie when he witnesses Charlie's quest to "[degrade himself] as much as possible" in his New York apartment with a dominatrix he has hired: I realized I didn't love Charlie any more. I didn't care either for or about him. He didn't interest me at all. I'd moved beyond him, discovering myself through what I rejected. He seemed merely foolish to me" (255). By rejecting Charlie, Karim symbolically rejects his desire to be white, and finally finds a way to 'be himself' by straddling the contradictions inherent in being born of "two old histories" without disavowing either. His personal transformation is reflected in his acceptance of a role that has him playing the "rebellious student son of an Indian shopkeeper" on a soap opera that addresses "the latest contemporary issues" like "abortions and racist attacks, the stuff that people lived through but that never got on TV" (259). Karim's transformation as an actor who performs stereotypical roles to one who addresses contemporary political issues suggests that he has come to terms with being *both* British *and* Indian, and has found, for himself, a "politically enabling British identity" (Needham 122, 123).

Rather than suggesting, as Fanon would, that Karim's desire for whiteness, his desire to *be* white, is pathological, Kureishi reveals the complexities and ambivalences of desire, and suggests that living with ambivalence may be the only liberating position to take given the persistence of racism in contemporary Britain. Instead of striving for Fanon's psychic wholeness

and curtailing interracial desire until such a time as racism is abolished, Kureishi posits a strategy that engages actively with the ambivalence of interracial desire. He suggests that the negotiation of power relations on an intimate level can lead to political alliances across multiple realms of discrimination. Interracial desire functions as an anti-racist strategy by embracing intermixture and transgressing racial boundaries to contest any and all claims to purity. Fanon encouraged the black man to avoid acting on interracial desire because acting on it confirms his inferiority complex. As long as the black man desires whiteness, he is incapable of liberating himself from his own psyche, and remains unable to participate in the struggle against social structures that enforce racism (*BSWM* 8, 100). But for Kureishi, interracial desire is not to be avoided, and acting on it gives him access to renegotiating his subject position and forming alliances across racial, sexual, class and gender lines. Intermixture and hybridity are Karim's realities, and bringing these to the forefront in a culture that demands purity is his act of defiance. It is his way of resisting the psychic, discursive and social structures that construct 'blackness' and 'Britishness' as mutually exclusive categories.

The interior limits of Karim's own politics are pointed out by Jamila, who is both theoretically and actively engaged in the transnational anti-racist movement of the 1970s, and who chides Karim for his selfishness and ambivalent relationship to the movement. Karim himself recognizes his limitations, telling readers: "Jamila was more advanced than I, in every way" (52). When Jamila discovers that the attentions of Miss Cutmore, a white librarian who had began teaching the thirteen-year-old Jamila about the European classics, are motivated

by her desire to 'civilize' a 'native' (Miss Cutmore had served as a missionary in Africa), she tells Karim that "Miss Cutmore had colonized her" (53), and goes about finding other ways of gaining power that have nothing to do with accessing it through whiteness. Jamila starts educating herself in black American feminism. She listens to "Bessie and Sarah and Dinah and Ella," and always carries with her a photograph of Angela Davis. She also trains herself in self-defense to fight off the racists who harass her on the street and throw fire bombs in her parents' store. "Compared to Jammie," says Karim, "I was, as a militant, a real shaker and trembler" (53). Jamila is also more sexually 'advanced' than Karim, and she initiates sex with him throughout their teenage years, but once he has fallen for Charlie he can no longer think of anyone else, "not even Jammie" (55). This suggests that Karim's fetishization of whiteness pulls him further away from forming a subjectivity based on identification with black politics, and from the type of activism practiced by Jamila. But through his affairs with white women and with Charlie he begins to understand how he himself has been psychically colonised, and develops a different strategy of resistance to racism.

Karim eventually finds his own way to be in the world as a hybrid subject who is both English and Indian. By juxtaposing Karim's and Jamila's different methods of destabilizing white power, Kureishi suggests that both strategies can be used in the struggle against racist oppression. As Lola Young points out, since "the black/white dichotomy remains at the very centre of 'race' discourse" (155), an effective anti-racism must bring theories that reject an essential black identity and political practices based on claims of an essential black identity into

productive dialogue. In this way we can understand, more clearly, the "ever-shifting positions of identification" that result from "the various modes of contemporary cultural encounters, the fluid circuits of identification, [and] the instances of double-consciousness which are concerned with the contradictions of being hybrid and essentialised simultaneously" (167). Through its representation of Karim's experience of being hybrid and essentialized simultaneously, and its consideration of two different methods of fighting racism, *The Buddha of Suburbia* brings theories that reject essential black identity and a political practice grounded in the fact that the black/white dichotomy remains at the centre of race discourse into dialogue. Through his exploration of the potentially freeing possibilities of hybridity, Karim becomes, by the end of the novel, fully aware of the costs and contributions of both strategies of resistance. And he becomes adept at constantly unfixing not only racial binaries, but also the sexual and gender binaries that contribute to the oppressive symbolic universe from which he is constantly trying to escape.

Chapter Two

Migrating Masculinities and Interracial Desire: "The Journey Back" and *Brothers in Trouble*

> From our relations with women we learn about ourselves. (Abdullah Hussein, "The Journey Back" 60)
>
> On a symbolic level men's desire for women is a product of and is, in a sense, subordinate to a homosocial matrix. (Gwen Bergner, "Who is That Masked Woman? or, The Role of Gender in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*" 81)

First published in Urdu as "Waapsi Ka Safar" in 1981, Abdullah Hussein's novella "The Journey Back" was translated into English and published in the collection *Downfall By Degrees* in 1987. In 1995, *Brothers in Trouble*, a film directed by Udayan Prasad and based on Hussein's novella, was released by Renegade Films for BBC Screen Two (Memon xxii). Both the novella and film tell the story of eighteen Pakistani male migrants, smuggled into Britain in the 1960s and working illegally. They live together in a dark, run-down Victorian house in Birmingham, and work at the lowest-paying jobs (mostly heavy labor factory work), trying to earn enough money to support family back home and set themselves up in England. The plots of both "The Journey Back" and *Brothers in Trouble* focus on the men's struggle for survival and monetary success in a country where they are easily exploited by opportunistic housing agents and employers, and where they are under constant threat of deportation by immigration officials. In both the novella and the film, they live in isolation, poverty and fear, and their main strategy for survival is to stick together and function as a community of 'brothers.'

In both versions of the story, the cohesiveness, and thus survival, of the homosocial community is threatened by the presence of a white woman, who functions as a fetish-object: mediating relations amongst the male migrants, and between the migrants and white male authority structures. But while Hussein's novella advocates a separatist strategy similar to Fanon's by suggesting that it is the interracial relationship between the South Asian men and a white woman that causes destruction for the men and their homosocial community, Prasad's film reveals the interior limits of decolonization by representing the men's use of women as fetish-objects as the real cause of the homosocial community's destruction. Like *The Buddha of Suburbia*, "The Journey Back" indicates that interracial desire poses a challenge to notions of social, cultural, national and racial purity that form the ideological underpinnings of racism. However, unlike Kureishi's novel, in which Karim delights in exposing the ambivalence of the binaries that construct racial, gendered and sexual subjects in oppositional terms, Hussein's narrator cannot live with ambivalence. He and the other men in the house continually strive to refix the cultural, religious and gender binaries that are unfixed by their attempts to gain masculine status in the new land.

As racialized men in the phallic economy of white patriarchy,[1] the migrants attempt to gain access to the power of the white patriarchal state through a white woman. However, their transgression of racial and cultural boundaries

[1]See chapter one for my discussion the phallic economy of white patriarchy in relation to *The Buddha of Suburbia* and how the system is configured in work by Bergner, Irigaray and Mariott.

continuously exposes the ambivalence of the binary structures on which their identities as South Asian men are based, and poses a threat to the concepts of cultural and spiritual purity through which they structure their relationships with each other. The binary categories that maintain the homosocial order they have developed as a method of survival are constantly destabilized through their attempts to negotiate masculinity in this hostile and unfamiliar land. And their constant attempts to re-establish the fixity of these binaries cause violent power struggles in the household, and eventually end in death, insanity and the almost complete dissolution of their fraternal bonds.

As Daniel Coleman argues in *Masculine Migrations*, where he analyzes masculine innovation and constraint in Canadian men's narratives of migration, "movement between distinct social communities" involves a "perspectival shift" for male migrants (3). He understands human subjectivity as dialogic in that it is produced by and simultaneously produces the surrounding social structures, and explains how masculine subjectivities are also organized along "multiple axes of differentiation" (9-10). When men emigrate, he writes, "they take a familiar, though not necessarily unified, set of masculine practices with them; when they immigrate, they encounter a second, less-familiar set of masculine practices" (3). He conceptualizes the relationship of the male migrant to his new location as one of cultural refraction:

> Just as the transition between elements makes the straight drinking-straw appear to bend in the glass of water, so, too, the transition from one culture to another produces distortions. Any movement between distinct social communities will involve such perspectival shifts; a move between rural and urban environments, for example, or between different linguistic

> or ethnic enclaves, occasions an encounter with a different set of social codes, including those of masculinity. The greater the combined geographical, cultural, and political difference between origin and destination, the greater the index of refraction between the migrant male's two sets of masculine practices. (3)

The migrant male's certitude about masculine subjectivity is disrupted by his experience of cross-cultural refraction, which distorts his two sets of masculine practices, resulting in what Coleman calls "masculine uncertainty" (4). Indeed, masculine certainty needs to be understood as an affect that comes and goes, and is more or less attainable to individual men at different times and in different situations, even within one's own culture of origin. Access to certainty depends on a whole range of categorical distinctions, including class, gender, ethnicity, education, physical ability, and much more. It is thus easy to imagine how it becomes even less stable in situations of cross-cultural refraction, when knowledge of a different system, and individual status in relation to it, further impairs a subject's access to the new culture's ideal masculinity.

Masculine uncertainty for male migrants is thus, understandably, an affective response to the process of adaptation to a different culture constituted by "a whole new constellation of civil codes, cultural regulations, social norms, and even legislated laws," which marginalize the male migrant from positions of authority both in public and at home (4-5). However, the continuity between patriarchal codes of masculinity that exists between cultures means that uncertainty does not arise from a pure opposition between the patriarchal codes of a man's culture of origin and destination (4). While the male migrant's positioning along multiple axes of differentiation may or may not have

marginalized him in relation to dominant masculinity at home, masculine certainty is undermined when he encounters a lack, or increased lack, of authority in the new culture. And because racism works through the process of exclusion and othering, the migrant male's experience of masculine uncertainty can be especially acute if he is a non-white immigrant in a predominantly white culture.

Like the Canadian men's migration narratives that Coleman analyzes, "The Journey Back" and *Brothers in Trouble* reveal that the male migrant's experience of cultural refraction is a result of the distortion of two sets of masculine practices. In both texts, masculine certainty is undermined by the disruptions of cross-cultural refraction between the masculine practices that determine patriarchal authority in Pakistan, and the masculine practices that determine patriarchal authority in England. These two sets of practices are represented as those determined by *customary practice* and those determined by *common law*. I draw these terms from May Joseph's *Nomadic Identities*, in which she argues that the tension between common law and customary practice constitutes a "crucial aspect of cultural and legal citizenship within the modern state" (116).

Unlike Coleman's conceptualization of cross cultural refraction for male migrants, which is caused by a distortion of familiar masculine practices, common law and customary practice are most often framed within a discourse of opposition. In British legal discourse, the media, and fictional representations, the tension between common law and customary practice is considered a result of an underlying set of "competing logics" (Joseph 117). As Joseph observes,

common law, or civil law, is the law of the British state, and constitutes the "contemporary orthodoxies of the secular culture within which [British immigrants] must live as British subjects" (117). The origin of customary practice as a discrete ideology emerged in British legal discourse during and after colonialism, and is characterized as oppositional to common law. British common law defines customary practice as "the elaboration of local customs, mores, and tribal authority" of the peoples it colonized, and represents it as "the complex and indeterminate collision with the secular and the modern" (117, fn12).

In contrast to Coleman's concept of cultural refraction, then, which suggests that the male migrant's movement from one culture to another requires adapting to existing patriarchal practices in an attempt to gain a sense of masculine certainty in the new location, the discourse that defines common law and customary practice as oppositional practices masks the fact that both common law and customary practice produce and enforce patriarchal authority. Carole Pateman reveals the patriarchal roots of common law when she argues in *The Sexual Contract* that the "social contract" which dominates common law and modern civil society in the west "is the means through which modern patriarchy is constituted" (2). And as Joseph points out, various ideologies articulated as customary practice also operate to authorize patriarchal rule:

> customary practice often works as a regulative economy governing women's bodies regardless of cultural specificity. Customary practice does not translate easily into the legal discourse of Western nations and therefore renders invisible the complex mechanisms through which women from Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, and Muslim cultures must forge psychic and legal access to individual rights. (116)

When constructed as oppositional ideologies, common law and customary practice appear irreconcilable. Thus, masculine uncertainty is inevitable, and becomes permanent mode of being for the male migrant who does not 'assimilate' by choosing common law over customary practice. However, when common law and customary practice are revealed as contiguous ideologies, the exploitative masculine practices they authorize are exposed, and the inequality they produce and the violence they condone become conspicuous.

In "The Journey Back," common law and customary practice are presented as oppositional ideologies that render the regulative economy through which women's bodies are governed invisible. *Brothers in Trouble*, however, reveals common law and customary practice as contiguous practices by deliberately exposing how women function as fetish-objects through which the male migrants struggle to regain masculine certainty. The novella represents common law and customary practice as oppositional. Their collision is figured through images of interracial desire and cross-cultural mixing, which result in death and insanity for the male migrants most involved with Mary, the white woman who comes to live with them. The film, however, draws attention to the similarities between common law and customary practices, and unfixes the binaries that the novella attempts to fix. That is, the film argues that common law and customary practice are not oppositional, but are rather different methods of reinforcing the same binaries structures that constitute the categories of gender, sexuality and race. In this way the film functions as a critique of the novella's continual refixing of the binaries that must be incessantly reiterated to re-

establish their status as opposites. The film asserts that death and insanity are not the result of the clash of common law with customary practice, but rather the destruction of the men's lives are the result of their participation in the exploitation of women as a means of gaining masculine certainty through oppressive patriarchal practices common to both South Asian and British cultures.

I begin my analysis with a detailed examination of "The Journey Back," drawing on Sara Ahmed's theory of how new migrant communities are produced, in order to examine how homosocial migrant community is created in the novella through reference to customary practice. I then discuss how Mary's presence disrupts the established order of the household, and how the men continuously attempt to contain her within the definition of 'proper' femininity as defined by their configuration of customary practice. Using Mary as a fetish-object enables the men to begin the process of re-inhabiting their bodies and regaining masculine certainty in their new location, but her assertion of female agency, which they see as a symptom of common law, undermines their authority and causes friction amongst the men and between the men and Mary. I end with an examination of how, through changes in characterization and the creation of imagery that highlights Mary's role as a symbol of white culture, *Brothers in Trouble* makes the sex-gender economy through which the men exploit Mary as fetish-object explicit. By exposing the ambivalences the novella attempts to refix, it reveals the fallacy of reading common law and customary practice as oppositional categories, and suggests that it is not Mary, but the men

themselves, who are accountable for the death and destruction their attempts to regain patriarchal authority have caused.

"The Journey Back": Re-Inhabiting Masculine Certainty

Abdullah Hussein is the pen-name of Muhammad Khan, a leading novelist in the Urdu language. Born in 1931 in Rawalpindi (then in India, now in Pakistan), Hussein left Pakistan in 1959 to attend university in Canada, then immigrated to London, England in 1967 (Memon, xvii; Ansari). His first novel *Udaas Naslen* (The Weary Generations), was published in 1963, and won the prestigious Pakistani Adamji Prize. It was translated by the author and published in English in 2000. Other novels include *Nasheb*, *Baagh*, and *Naader Log*. His most recent novel, *Emigré Journeys* (2000), is his first novel written originally in English. Hussein is described by Muhammad Umar Memon, editor and translator of *Downfall by Degrees* and *Stories of Exile and Alienation*,[2] as "something of an uncritical neo-Marxist in his celebration of the working classes, whom he idealizes rather at the expense of the educated and the élite" (xvii). Hussein says that history and politics "have played a great role" in all of his writing, and that although influenced by "the great literatures of the West" and "Western liberal traditions," when he is writing in Urdu he is "conscious that the Urdu language is

[2]The three stories and two novellas published in *Stories of Exile and Alienation* were published as the collection *Downfall by Degrees and Other Stories* in 1987. They are reprinted in *Stories of Exile and Alienation* as the inaugural volume in the Oxford University Press's Pakistan Writers Series, with minor revisions and the addition of a biographical essay on Abdullah Hussein by Muhammad Umar Memon (Memon, "Preface and Acknowledgements" xiv).

a powerful presence in [his] writing" (Hussein, "Interview with Rakhshanda Jalil"). His strong focus on the struggles of working class people, his knowledge of both Pakistani and British cultures, languages, and literary traditions, and his own experience as a male migrant to England, make "The Journey Back" a compelling text to analyze for its representation of migrant masculinity and the tensions between common law and customary practice in the lives of working-class Pakistani male migrants in Britain.

In *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, Sara Ahmed considers how migrant identity and new communities are constructed in new locations. At stake for migrants, she writes, is the leaving of "a space in which one has already been enveloped, inhabited by," and the re-inhabiting of one's body in a new location. She argues that 'being-at-home' involves not just an "immersion of a self in a locality," but that it also involves the intrusion of the locality "into the senses." The locality, she writes, "defines what one smells, hears, touches, feels, remembers . . . being-at-home suggests that the subject and space leak into each other, *inhabit each other*" (89). Migration narratives thus involve "a spatial reconfiguration of an embodied self" (90). The re-inhabiting of the body in a new location, Ahmed asserts, is facilitated by the production of new communities, and is made possible "through gestures of friendship with others who are already recognized as strangers" in the migrant's new location: "It is the role of community in the re-inhabiting of migrant bodies that is so important" (93). New communities come to life, she writes, "through the collective act of remembering in the absence of a common terrain" (93). While

memories of home are usually conceptualized as the reflections of an already formed community, Ahmed argues that "memory can be understood as a collective act which produces its object (the 'we') rather than reflects on it" (91). In "The Journey Back," the narrator produces male community, the 'we' that the story both speaks to and refers to, largely through memory and a reconfiguration of customary masculine practice in the new location.

The first-person narrator, one of the eighteen Pakistani migrants who occupy the Birmingham house, remains unnamed throughout the story. He constructs an image of community through memory, setting the story up as an account of a past collective experience. Referring to an already constructed community, he tells readers: 'We eighteen men lived in that house . . . This story is from the time when I first left my country and came here" (60). The opening line of the story establishes that the homosocial community the narrator constructs is ideologically grounded in the sex-gender economy in which women function as fetish-objects: "From our relations with women," begins the narrator, "we learn about ourselves" (60). By beginning with this direct address to other men, the narrator clearly situates women outside of the intended readership of the text, and external to the male community that is produced in the story. And by suggesting that "relationships with women" should be used by men as a method of coming to know themselves and other men more thoroughly, he explicitly sets women up as fetish-objects through which ostensibly heterosexual men can establish homosocial relationships with each other. Evidently, readers can thus assume that this is a story told by a man, for men, about the communal

experience of male migrants. The rest of the story is a description of how the migrant male community was built, and then how it was destroyed, and suggests that other men can learn about themselves through this story of the male migrants' "relations with women" in the process of re-inhabiting one's body in a new location.

Prior to Mary's arrival in the house, the narrator tells us, the men establish community through "two activities on Sundays." The first activity "is going to the movies" to see Urdu and Punjabi films (76), a ritual that ties them together through memories of their homes and the masculine roles they performed there. The second is "the prostitutes' visit (79), an activity through which they establish the hierarchical order of the homosocial community in relation to customary practice. The Sunday custom of going to the movies involves the gathering of "a few hundred" South Asian men who "paraded right through white territory" to the theatre. As 'illegal aliens,' the men feel safer out in public as part of a larger group, since it was "impossible for the police or any other white man to figure out who among us was a legal alien and who illegal" (77). When the film started, says the narrator, "it put you into a familiar world: your own movie stars, your own language, dances, songs, jokes, the same story line, the same scenes–you felt as if you had never left your country" (78). During the films, says the narrator, "[w]e thought about our homes, wives and children constantly–the very same things we never much concerned ourselves with before" (79). By triggering memories of their "homes, wives and children," and of the "sounds and smells of home" (79), the films sensitize the men to how they both inhabited, and were

inhabited by, their homes. The fact that their masculine roles are integral to their nostalgia for home indicates that they also imagine as part of the experience of 'being-at-home.'

The narrator's description of the men's memories of home suggest that while the films allow them to momentarily re-inhabit their bodies by immersing them in familiar scenes from home, the experience simultaneously reinforces their sense of dislocation and uncertainty in the new space. As he contemplates his memories of home, the narrator distinguishes between 'proper' and 'improper' fetish objects; he says that if he were to marry a white English woman, he could never gain the sense of masculine certainty he could with his 'own women' in his Pakistan. A man could, he says, "marry someone and raise a family here," but a certain "satisfaction" that one could only feel when "speaking your native language" could never be realized (79). Watching the films together, the men re-inhabit their homes and experience the satisfaction of familiar masculine practices momentarily. But this feeling is fleeting, for the "satisfaction" radiating from the men's faces "was already dimmed by the time they reached the exit" (79).

The intense joy and sadness the men feel both during and after watching the films indicates that the male bonding that occurs during this excursion is grounded in their powerful ties to 'home', as well as in their shared status as racial 'others' amongst the white British, whom they must walk amongst in order to get to the theatre and back to their houses. Their longing for 'their women', children and homes, and their extreme discomfort in public space, suggests that

they have yet to re-inhabit their bodies and gain masculine certainty in their new location, and that this difficulty is exacerbated by racism. Their sense of community is represented as a shared experience of a loss of masculine certainty in England, coupled with their yearning for the masculine certainty they supposedly felt with their 'own women' at home. Their shared experience of nostalgia for home, and for their familiar patriarchal roles, is largely what defines them as a community in their new location.

"[T]he prostitutes' visit" constitutes the "second major event" the men participate in on Sundays (79), and reveals how a female fetish-object enables the differentiation of masculine subject positions in the household. The interactions amongst the men during the "activity" reveal how the men draw on practices from home, adapting them to their present situation to establish relations between them that are hierarchically ordered, thus enabling some of the men to gain a sense of masculine certainty, at least within the household. Masculine subject positions are differentiated in relation to customary practices, namely respect for devout Muslims, and in the common practice of racism towards Bengalis.[3] Originally, the men left the house to visit prostitutes on their own, and "paid individually" (79). But Husain Shah soon "came up with an alternative" that would save them money while lowering their risk of being caught by authorities and deported (79). This plan consisted of hiring one of the many

[3]According to Zia Ahmed, "[r]acism in a multitude of forms pervades the very fabric of Pakistani society." To most people in Pakistan, she writes, Bengalis are "fish-eating, drowning, starving masses, menial servants, or sugarcane juice-wallas, "and "Bengali culture, art and literature do not feature in this worldview" ("Our Racism").

sex workers who lived on the street "for a fixed time and rate," and having her come to the house. The men then lined up outside a room on the second floor to wait their turn (79-80). The only man who refuses to take part in the activity is Saqib, the youngest of all the men, and considered "terribly young and delicate" (73). The older men are happy about Saqib's refusal, says the narrator, because they see him as an innocent and feel protective towards him: "[h]e was just a kid, and [the men] loved him like a son" (80). The men consider Saqib inexperienced and naïve in terms of the sex-gender economy: he has no wife or children "back home," only his mother, whom he writes to "every week" (73-74). As a "kid," Saqib has not been initiated into the phallic economy that differentiates his masculine subjectivity in relation to the sexual exchange of women between men.

The status of the men who have been initiated into this economy is grounded in ideologies of purity–spiritual and racial–and is signified by their place in line for the services of the sex-worker. Husain Shah "was always number one in the line" (80) for a number of different reasons. Husain Shah is the man identified most closely with traits considered 'masculine' by the men occupying the house: physical strength, self-control, spiritual purity and adherence to a strict daily routine. Not only does Husain Shah's own life have "an innate order to it," says the narrator, but his presence also "kept the whole house together" (119). Husain Shah is seen as an immovable force of masculine tradition by the migrants, and his sternness and physical strength cause the other men to both fear and respect him. His place in line is also taken for granted because it is he

who organizes the prostitute's visit, and because he is a *namazi:* one who performs *namaz*, "Islamic ritual prayer performed at five specific times during each twenty-four hour period" (Memon, "Glossary" xxxviii). Four other *namazis* followed Husain Shah in the line-up, and the narrator tells readers that their commitment to ritual bathing, "and their obsessive devoutness," are what earn them "a status of respect" amongst the other men in the house (80). Next in line are the Hafizabadis, because it is their room that is used, and "[w]hoever came after them depended on seniority in the house: the longer one had lived there, the higher his place in the line" (81). "Obviously" the narrator tells us, "the rule didn't apply to the Bengalis." Because of their low racial status, "[t]hey came last of all, even though they had been living in the house long enough to belong somewhere in the middle" (81).

The presence of the female sex-workers facilitates the men's establishment of their masculine subject positions in relation to race, and clearly reveals how women are valued only as possessions in a symbolic economy that "produces a hierarchical relation between the groups of men it delineates" (Bergner 81). The enactment of this particular form of racism creates community amongst the majority of the men by emphasizing the regional, ethnic and linguistic differences of the Bengalis, while downplaying the regional, ethnic and linguistic differences amongst the other men. This confirms Sara Ahmed's assertion that communities produce themselves, in part, through collective acts of remembering which, paradoxically, reveal an "absence of a common terrain" (93). While the collective acts of remembering in the story reveal an absence of

common terrain between the men in terms of ethnicity and previous regional location, the men simultaneously produce common terrain, using the dynamics of differentiation to set themselves apart from the Bengalis, thereby fixing the binary that enables them to assert a collective identity. The men, most of whom were strangers to each other before arriving in their new location, and who are considered strangers in this new country, exploit the social practice of racism, and draw on customary practices of respect for devout Muslims, to differentiate between masculine subject positions and thereby produce a sense of masculine certainty in their new location.

A sense of masculine certainty for the majority of the migrants is also gained through the denigration of the white female sex-workers. The description of the men's place in the line-up shows that the ordering of male relationships is negotiated in relation to sexual 'possession' of the white sex-workers, who are described derogatorily as "[a] horde" (79). Like the Bengalis, they are considered less-than-human, and as such they do not signify as representatives of the white British, and therefore pose no threat to the relations established between the migrant men. It is only after the arrival of Mary, who signifies as a representative of the white British, and who also functions as a fetish-object that mediates relations between men, that the tensions between common law and customary practice begin to disrupt the orderly household.

A year after the narrator first arrives in the house, the order established through reference to customary practice as a field of common terrain is disrupted by Mary's presence, which "changed the entire character of [their] house" (82).

The change is so acute, claims the narrator, that before he even knows Mary is in the house, he senses something is different: "Returning from work one night, I knew something was up the minute I stepped into the house" (82). When he gets to the third floor the narrator hears "a woman's voice coming from Husain Shah's room," and Saqib tells him that Husain Shah "had brought a white woman home" (82). Along with Saqib and Ghulam Muhammad, the narrator listens "to the voices behind the wall for a long time" trying to determine whether or not the woman is "a hooker" (82). The white women the men usually associated with "were all prostitutes," and do not signify a threat to the homosocial order established through reference to customary practice. But "no woman had ever spent the night in [their] house" (83). Their confusion about how they should behave towards a white woman who is not a sex-worker causes them a great deal of anxiety, disrupting the sense of masculine certainty they have gained within their homosocial community.

The living quarters of the men in the house are divided by their access to two separate kitchen areas, and the men themselves are divided by their ethnic, linguistic and regional Pakistani identities. The Mirpuris on the first floor, and Hafizabadis on the second floor, share a kitchen (74). The Hafizabadis, the narrator points out, "had to contend with the Bengalis," who also lived on the second floor, and were "always jabbering away continuously in Bengali" (74). The narrator shares the third floor and its kitchen with his room-mate Ghulam Muhammad, a Gujarati, Husain Shah, a Pathan from Cambellpore, and Saqib, who is from "the city" (74). The narrator, Saqib and Ghulam Muhammad sit

outside Husain Shah's bedroom door for hours that night, sensing that "whatever had happened behind it had somehow changed everything for [them]" (84).

That night, the three men are so overwhelmed by Mary's presence in their living space, that their "hearts began to pound every time she opened her mouth," and they refrain from cooking because it would require turning on the light and making noise. They are "dazed" and "[immobile]," and think of her as such a strange and fragile creature that they fear "the slightest sound or movement on [their] part might hush up the woman and send her scrambling away from the house" (83). The one question on all their minds is: "was this woman going to stay here? The entire routine of [their] household depended on the answer" (83). When they realize that Husain Shah and Mary have "turned off the light and gone to sleep," they are "flabbergasted" (84). As they continue to stare at the door, they realize how the white woman's presence has already upset the routine of the household: they have missed their dinner; Husain Shah is missing his night shift, and has missed his "gargling ritual," "his ablutions" and his prayers; and nobody in the house "had gone to sleep yet" (84).

While Mary's first night in the house causes the breakdown of the men's established routine, her continued presence disrupts the order of the household for good. The virgin/whore dichotomy that categorizes women as either/or in patriarchal systems is applied to determine how Mary should be treated by the men, and is justified through reference to customary practice. While the sex-workers obviously fall into the disreputable side of this binary, categorizing Mary poses a problem for the men. Although, as the narrator says, they "knew very

well that Mary was a, well that sort of woman" (88), i.e., a 'whore,' they consistently contain the ambivalence produced by the dynamics of differentiation in the virgin/whore dichotomy. Unlike the prostitutes, who provide sexual services for all the men, Mary registers as the sexual property of Husain Shah, whose status as house patriarch further compels them to categorize Mary as a respectable woman. However, when the men find out that she is pregnant with her ex-lover's baby, and that Mary herself has lived with many men outside of marriage, they consult Sherbaz, a *namazi* who functions as their spiritual advisor. He ends their questioning of Mary's reputation by proclaiming that "any child was God's blessing," and therefore they "wouldn't hold it against her" (98). Because Mary is the possession of one man, and the mother of a child, the men's behavior towards her is fashioned after the treatment of one of their 'own women' who is a wife and mother. Their treatment of Mary is therefore defined by patriarchal codes that determine proper modes for the distribution of women between men, and is justified through reference to Islamic codes of customary religious practice. By categorizing Mary as a wife and mother, the men clarify her role as a specific kind of fetish-object in their lives, and thereby regain a sense of masculine certainty that was disrupted by Mary's arrival in their living space. Mary's function as a 'wife' and 'mother' benefits the migrants in ways that are different from the mediating role the sex-workers provide for the men: she facilitates more cohesiveness amongst the men in the house, and she mediates relationships between the migrants and authoritative structures of the white male establishment.

Prior to Mary's arrival, observes the narrator, those on the top floors "didn't have much to do with the people downstairs" (74). After their acceptance of her as Husain Shah's woman, however, the men's rigidly ordered routine gives way to more socializing amongst them: a change they welcome. "Thanks to Mary," says the narrator, "we had become friends with the Hafizabadis" (96) who occupy the second floor. Mary immediately begins to mediate relations between the men, who quickly become less restrained in their relationships with each other. She frequently visits with the narrator, Saqib, and Ghulam, and encourages them "to go downstairs with her," where they visit and smoke with the other men (96). The birth of the baby brings much "gaiety" into the house, and causes the men to socialize amongst themselves even more (101). While Mary's "great interest" in the men's personal lives, and in their "lifestyle. . . customs and traditions . . . education and upbringing" (96) mediate relations between the men inside the house, her role as mediator between the migrants and the Phallic economy of white British authority structures facilitates their movement into "a life free of fear" (90) outside the house.

By acting as a facilitator between the migrants and their new location, Mary enables them to re-inhabit their bodies and thereby regain a sense of masculine certainty undermined by cross-cultural refraction. This is clear in the narrator's characterization of the moment when Mary first says "hello" and "smile[s] at [them] pleasantly" as a moment of transformation in their struggle to belong in this strange country. Her gesture of recognition signifies the beginning of their re-inhabitation of their bodies in their new location, and the men's

reaction confirms her function as fetish-object in their lives:

> How just one word, or even a simple smile, can transform everything! *We were suddenly in touch with ourselves*. For the first time ever, this country no longer seemed so distant and inaccessible. We ate our meal in silence, turned off the light and went to sleep with a new warmth in our hearts. Indeed *we had our first real encounter with this country on that evening*. (86-87, my italics)

The narrator, Saqib, and Ghulam Muhammad are so surprised by Mary's acknowledgment of them that after they return her greeting they are "struck dumb, unable to move or even utter a word" (86). Their speechlessness, and the fact that their initial interaction with Mary makes "it [seem] that [their] thoughts had fallen out of [their] heads" (86). That their first encounter with Mary is characterized as their "first real encounter" with England, and an encounter so powerful it renders them both speechless and thought-less, means that unlike the sex-workers, Mary is objectified as a representative of the white British.

As fetish-objects, women function for men as "abstraction[s]", or "symbols," in the sex-gender economy (Bergner 81). And as Fanon argues, for both the colonizers and colonized white women signify as the property of the white man, and a symbol of whiteness itself (*BSWM* 63). As a symbol of the white British, and as 'property of the white man,' Mary's presence introduces a tension between common law and customary practice into the house. Although this tension is represented as the cause of the eventual demise of the household, it is first shown to facilitate new relations amongst the men, and to increase the men's access to white society. Unlike Fanon's black man who wants to be white (*BSWM* 63), the migrant men of "The Journey Back" are not

interested in shedding their cultural identities and assimilating into white culture; they seem simply to want to be able to earn a living there and perhaps someday bring their own families to England. Saqib provides the only exception to this rule, and his demise (which I discuss further on) is caused by his desire to absorb more of white culture, a desire symbolized by his plan to run away to London with Mary and become a writer. There is also no talk amongst the men of using a white woman as a means of getting revenge for the violations of colonialism, or the racism the men experience as migrants in Britain, as there is in the texts of Fanon and Kureishi. However, because Mary facilitates their ability to move about the streets without fear of being arrested and deported, she still functions as a fetish-object, mediating relations between them and white culture.

Grocery shopping is considered one of the most risky activities the men must perform, since "[i]llegal aliens usually got picked up in stores shopping for food" (75). But when Mary takes the narrator and Saqib shopping with her, they are not only safe from the authorities, but they also feel at home in England for the first time. The men's usual shopping excursions were "hazardous undertaking[s]" (75). They consisted of "stepping into a shop timidly, hurriedly whisking whatever [they] needed into the basket, doling out the money, throwing the stuff into [their] bags, and getting the hell out of there" (91). But in Mary's presence, Saqib and the narrator go to a number of stores until they find the best prices: "This was absolutely the first time that we actually picked up an item, checked its price, put it down and chose a different one. In other words, this was the first time we really went shopping" (91-92).

Mary introduces the narrator and Saqib as her "'friends'" to a shopkeeper, who acknowledges them respectfully when he says: "'Welcome, Gentlemen!'" (92). And when they see a policeman, the men want to cross the street to avoid him, but "he turned out to be another friend of Mary's" who poses no threat to them when they are in her presence (92). When they arrive home after their first shopping trip with Mary, the narrator exclaims: "we really felt it–yes, we really *live* here, and this is *our* house" (92, italics in original). By accompanying the men on shopping trips, Mary acts as a facilitator between them and white authority figures. This enables them to begin inhabiting the space outside the house and reconfiguring their subjectivity in this new locality, which Sara Ahmed argues is an integral part of re-embodying the self in a new location (89-90). Their sense that they "really *live* here," and that they feel a sense of ownership of their house, suggests that their ability to occupy public space without fear contributes to their sense of masculine certainty. Thus, Mary's role as fetish-object, mediating relations between the men and white authority structures, enables them to begin re-establishing masculine certainty and re-inhabiting their bodies in England.

In her role as mediator between the men in the house and the established authority of the white world outside the house (including the police, and the grocery store owners who report illegal aliens to the authorities), Mary becomes a manifestation of the circulation of the power of the Phallus. She operates as a fetish-object for the migrants, establishing relationships amongst them, and between them and authoritative structures of the white male establishment which has, through common law, the power to either authorize or outlaw their presence

in England. As long as the men are able to conceptualize their relationship to Mary by defining her role as fetish-object in terms of customary practice, their masculine certainty within the household remains intact. However, this certainty is destabilized when Husain Shah attempts to mix common law with customary practice by asking Mary to enter into a 'paper marriage' with his nephew Irshad, so "the boy" can gain entry to England as a legal immigrant (103).

When the men first learn that Husain Shah has asked Mary to marry Irshad, they object to the proposal through reference to Islamic codes of proper masculine practice. As the narrator tells us: "[e]veryone sided with Mary on the matter," and they all agreed that they must "stop Husain Shah" from carrying out such a "rash act" (103). Sherbaz argues that according to customary religious practice, "this business of blood-related men sharing the same woman violated the precepts established both by God and His Prophet" (103). In response to these objections, Husain Shah assures them that his plan does not violate their ideas of customary masculine practice by setting the two practices up as oppositional. One way he articulates this is by explaining that common law marriage does not constitute a "real marriage," and that Mary will therefore continue to belong to him alone, and not also to Irshad:

> 'Who in the world is talking about a real marriage' he says. 'What–you don't really think I've completely gone off my rocker to send my own woman off to marry someone else? I explained all of this to Mary: I'm only asking her to go through the motions . . . Just to meet the legal requirements. All we have to do is comply with this point of their law so the boy can come here.' (103)

To convince those who are still skeptical, Husain Shah appeals to the men's

sense of loyalty to each other as illegals, and as men who have "all been through a lot of hardship," and who have lost much of their masculine certainty living in a place where they are disempowered by "[a]gents" and "foremen" who exploit their vulnerable situation, and to the "police" and "government" who force them to "live in hiding" (103). Taking advantage of Mary's status as a citizen of England will, he argues, enable Irshad to enter the country legally, and will thus allow him to have a better life than they themselves have had as overworked and underpaid fugitives in a strange land.

In a final appeal to his fellow migrants, Husain Shah reminds them of Mary's proper role as fetish-object in the sex-gender economy of customary practice, and of their duty to align themselves with him, since they are, after all, his 'brothers," and "have the same needs, the same obligations" as he does (104). Furthermore, he tells them, he has "rights over Mary" because he supports her financially and "treats her with respect" (104). He also draws a comparison between what is expected of Mary, and what the men would all expect from their "'own women.'" This argument solidifies the idea that their customary practices are distinct from common law in terms of women's obligations towards men: "'If it was one of our own women, she'd have given her life for me! This one can't even scrawl her name on a piece of paper!'" (104).

By arguing that a common law, or 'paper marriage,' does not constitute a "real marriage," and that he has no intention of sharing his "own woman" with Irshad, he shuts down the ambivalent meaning that has been opened up by his proposal to mix common law and customary practice. If common law and

customary practice are revealed as the same rather than different, the men can no longer maintain the myth of the stable binaries between them and the English, which define them as a separate community who must stick together. Husain Shah's argument that despite Mary's status as an English citizen governed by common law she is obliged to act according to customary practice convinces the men of the stability of the binary structure that holds them together. This system works for the men as long as the distribution of women through the sex-gender economy defined under customary practice prevails in the household.

Husain Shah's reasoning masks the fact that in both British common law and the practices deemed customary by the men in the house, women are exploited as fetish-objects. The white phallic order that establishes common law practices in Britain participates in the exchange of women through the common law marriage contract, masking the sex-gender economy through the discourse of romantic love. While Husain Shah's appropriation of Mary's legal status for his own benefit, and for the benefit his nephew, signifies a contestation of the power relations established by the white phallic order, it also reveals how the white woman's body is used as a fetish-object by men who are disempowered by the white male state. Husain Shah's exploitation of the common law marriage contract signifies a challenge to white male authority; but this challenge comes at the cost of exploiting Mary as an object of exchange between men.

While the men agree with Husain Shah that Mary's proper role is one of fetish-object, she resists the idea, expressing her disbelief to Saqib: "Husain Shah is asking me to marry his nephew . . . If I agree to marry him, he would be

able to enter the country legally–I mean look at this, can you believe it?'" (102). Mary immediately refuses Husain Shah's request, and when she realizes that all of the men think that she should carry out the 'paper marriage,' she stops socializing with them and becomes argumentative and critical (108). In an attempt to reinforce the regulative economy governing women's bodies through customary practice, the men articulate disapproval of Mary's refusal to facilitate Irshad's legal entry into England in misogynist terms. This misogyny is articulated through the narrator's comments about Mary's change in attitude towards the men, and the men's approval of the violent consequences she suffers when she refuses the marriage after the men had all agreed it was the right thing to do: "We couldn't understand what was wrong with Mary. The matter was settled . . . Why, then, was she making such a big fuss over it? Well, we knew she was asking for it and was going to get it one of these days . . .and she did" (106).

Because the men can reconcile the 'paper marriage' in terms of Mary's proper role under customary practice, they interpret her refusal as a sign of her stubbornness and ignorance (106). When Husain Shah–through violence, verbal bullying, and threats of expelling her from the house with her newborn–has succeeded in forcing Mary to submit to the wedding, the narrator attributes her stubbornness to an innate difference between men and women: "women's minds work differently" (108). And instead of reading Mary's reaction to her treatment as a fetish-object as a reaction to unequal power relations, the narrator de-politicizes and de-values her resistance, saying that her assertion of agency shows a stubbornness that must be part of "her true nature" (108) as a woman.

Even though Husain Shah's attempt to mix common law and customary practice initiates the breakdown of the "wonderful household accord" (101), the narrator insists that it is Mary's refusal to passively accept her proper role as fetish-object, as determined by customary practice, that causes further trouble in the house. After the 'paper marriage,' the common law couple exploit the legal status of 'paper marriage' to transgress the rules laid out by customary practice that forbid Irshad to sleep with Mary. Under common law, he has gained ownership over her. And because of the 'paper marriage,' Irshad has "all the rights of any white" (111), and the "freedom" his status as a legal immigrant under common law affords him, says the narrator, "ruin[s] him in the end" (112). Irshad begins frequenting the pubs, and takes Saqib out to drink. When he and Mary begin sleeping with each other, she is blamed for violating the customary religious practice that forbids "blood-related men sharing the same woman" (103): "I really don't think Irshad was at fault. Mary's encouragement had spurred him on. What can a man do when a woman is bent on getting her way?" (115).

The gap that Husain Shah has opened up between common law and customary practice is exploited by Irshad, who quickly learns how to exploit the male privilege afforded to him under common law. He transgresses the rules of lineage and age defined under customary practice, which require a nephew to show respect to his uncle, undermining the masculine certainty that Husain Shah has gained as the patriarch of the house. Customary practice requires Irshad to give Husain Shah payments from his wages, which he does "out of the sense of obligation a nephew ought to feel toward his uncle" (112). But when Husain Shah

beats his nephew for sleeping with Mary, Irshad responds by threatening him with the power of common law: "'Uncle! . . . I'll turn you in! You are staying here illegally. I'll turn everyone in!'" (121). Irshad's legal status gives him power over the other migrants, but Sherbaz convinces him that 'brotherhood' is more important: "there is so much to be gained by sticking together'" (122). Uncle and nephew reconcile their differences, and Irshad again shows deference to customary practice, and to his uncle, by increasing his payments to his Husain Shah "by a few pounds" per week, "to win his uncle back" (123). This transaction of a woman and money between uncle and nephew confirms Bergner's claims that women function as commodities, "mediating social and symbolic relationships among men," and that "[o]n a symbolic level men's desire for women is a product of and is, in a sense, subordinate to a homosocial matrix" (81). Once the disruption of the "homosocial matrix" signified by the conflict between uncle and nephew is settled through the exchange of money, the narrator thinks "[e]verything would have kept going just fine if Mary had remained within her limits" (123).

Mary's "limits" are to stay within the economy of exchange arranged between uncle and nephew and defined by customary practice. These "limits" are transgressed, according to the narrator, not by Irshad or Husain Shah, but by Mary's interest in Saqib, who everyone thinks of as "a young, naïve boy" because he has not yet been initiated into the sex-gender economy, is considered "shameless" (123). Mary begins to entertain Saqib in her room, and after this, says the narrator, his behavior changes radically. This change is depicted in

terms of his alienation from the men and Pakistani culture, and his growing obsession with Mary and English culture, which are again characterized as oppositional, or antithetical, to each other:

> He started keeping secrets from us. He still ate with us, but socialized less and less. It seemed as if the closer he got to Mary, the further he drifted away from us. Saqib's English was much better than ours, and he was deservedly proud of it. The ease with which he spoke it had brought them close together in a way. Saqib dropped reading his Urdu literary journals and picked up English magazines instead. (124)

Saqib's obsession with Mary is so great that "his eyes were always riveted on Mary's door. And when he wasn't in his room, he followed her around like a shadow, his gaze trained on her, as if he were half-crazed" (125). While the "freedom" Irshad gains as a legal immigrant under common law is considered the cause of his ruin (112), Saqib's romantic obsession with Mary, which symbolizes his involvement in the sex-gender economy of common law, is deemed the cause of his insanity.

When Mary starts spending time alone with Saqib, the dispute about who 'owns' Mary is once again ignited, and results in jealousy and loud arguments over money between uncle and nephew. Under customary practice, Husain Shah owns Mary, but under common law, Irshad does. Saqib's involvement with Mary indicates that the mixing of common law and customary practice has resulted in chaos, which is represented as a reversal of power relations between women and men. Once Mary begins seeing Saqib, the power Husain Shah once had over the household now belongs to Mary, who has, the narrator thinks, far too much power under common law; she has now gained "full control over

everything" (123). Masculine control of the house has been completely reversed, and Mary's usurping of power over the men is represented as the cause of the "incident" that is "of such magnitude" that it "blasted [their] home like a bomb, flinging [the men] all over the place" (127). The "incident" is the double murder of Husain Shah and Irshad, which starts with shouting and swearing in Husain Shah and Mary's room, and ends with "a big thump on the floor" and "Mary . . . . screaming for her life" (127). When the narrator and the other men kick the door open, they see Husain Shah and Irshad soaked in blood and dead on the floor. And Saqib, who has forfeited customary practice in the name of romantic obsession for a white woman, is standing "between the two of them holding Mary's butcher's knife, dripping with blood" (127). Everyone, except Mary and Saqib, quickly gathers what he can of his belongings and flees the house.

The narrator ends up living "a life of anonymity" in Glasgow for a few years (128), and there he meets an old neighbor from Birmingham and finds out that Saqib had "pleaded guilty" to the murder of the two men, "whereupon the court ordered a psychiatric evaluation," found him "mentally incompetent," and placed him in "an institution for the criminally insane" (130). When the narrator visits Saqib he realizes that Saqib has changed from a "bright," "quick," ambitious young man who had "[pored] over his literary journals," to a broken man whose "world was so small, and completely sealed off from anything else." And he wonders what Saqib did "to deserve" his insanity (133-34). When the narrator meets Mary one day on the street, she tells him what really happened in the room that night. Husain Shah and Irshad "'had been fighting over money'" when

they stabbed each other, Mary tells the narrator. And they would have "'finished each other off by themselves,'" but Saqib "'picked up the knife'" and "'[he] fell on the two of them, looking at [Mary] again and again as he ripped them apart with the knife; it was as if he were performing some feat'" (140-41). Saqib's stabbing of Husain Shah and Irshad while looking at Mary signifies his desire to eliminate his rivals for Mary's affections, and indicates what Saqib had done "to deserve" his insanity: he forsook his loyalty to his 'brothers' in favor of interracial desire and assimilation into white culture. The deaths of Husain Shah and Irshad are caused by their violation of the homosocial laws of customary practice, which say that two men of the same family should not share the same woman.

In Glasgow, the narrator lives, unwed, with a white woman for a number of years. But as soon as he has enough money to buy a house, and to bring his own wife and children to England, he leaves his white lover and the child they have together. The narrator's ability to 'succeed' in England is grounded in his ability to use the white woman as a fetish-object who facilitates his ability to create a 'home' for himself in England without forfeiting customary practices for good. His white lover is a temporary replacement for the preferred fetish-object: his 'own woman'. It is his own wife, he believes, who will abide by customary practice and pose no threat to his patriarchal authority. However, at the end of the story the narrator reveals that his authority has been challenged by his wife, who threw a glass jug at his head when he "slapped her" to stop her from "yapping away at [him]" (142). His violence is commonplace in their relationship, but his wife's was completely out of character. His wife is repentant, and the

narrator thinks of it as "only an accident" (143), rather than an attempt to assert her agency; thus, his masculine certainty remains intact.

The end of the story implies, however, that the narrator's certainty about the sex-gender economy and customary masculine practices is shaken by his wife's presence in England. He wonders why, even though "[s]he has all the comforts anyone can ask for," she "has been unhappy since the day she set foot in this country" (143). This leads to him wondering whether, like the male migrants of the story, "women too live in an exile all their own" (143). The narrator's comparison of the experience of being an outsider in a hostile land to the experience of women as the 'exiled' gender indicates the possibility that the male migrant's own experience of subordination opens him to a deeper understanding of unequal power relations in other realms of social organization. And while the suggestion that women, too, are exiles signals a critique of the sex-gender system that exploits women to ensure masculine dominance, the narrator's continual insistence that Mary is to blame for the tragedy obscures such a reading, and ensures that the relations between men, and the concept of the male migrant as exile struggling to re-inhabit his body in a foreign land, remains the novella's dominant concern.

Ultimately, the novella suggests that white women cannot substitute as fetish-objects under customary practice, because they will never conform to customary practices. They represent common law, and will undermine masculine certainty, which can only be established for the male migrants through customary masculine practices. The story also suggests that the mixing of customary

practice with common law will cause death and destruction for male migrants, and will undermine their ability to succeed in England. While the novella does not speak explicitly about race, or the psychological affects of racism or colonialism, the men's constitution as racial others who live in constant fear of deportation puts them in a category similar to Fanon's black man who travels to Europe. And the position it articulates on interracial desire is similar to Fanon's. That is, while the white woman can facilitate access to white society for the black male migrant, access through her disrupts relationships between black migrant men and their peers. In this view, interracial relationships between migrant men and white women will end in destruction for the men and the migrant male community: not because the black male migrant is renouncing his blackness, as Fanon argues, but rather because he is renouncing common law for customary practice. Like Fanon's inability to live politically with ambivalence, the men cannot live with the ambivalence that becomes apparent when common law and customary practice meet in their home. The frustration that results from the difficulty in containing this ambivalence engenders the violence that eventually destroys their fraternal bonds for good.

Exposing Patriarchal Exploitation: *Brothers in Trouble*

Brothers in Trouble retains a strong concern with the struggle of the male migrants emphasized in "The Journey Back." At the same time it explicitly critiques the migrants' use of women as fetish-objects as a means of regaining masculine certainty undermined by cross-cultural refraction. The film

accomplishes its critique, I argue, by emphasizing Mary's role as fetish-object for the men in the household.[4] The film does this by focusing on her vulnerability as a poor Irish woman who was raised in an abusive household, by emphasizing the exploitative practices of Husain Shah, and through images that clearly reveal how Mary functions for the men as a symbol of white culture and fetish-object through which men establish relationships with each other. Using these representational strategies, *Brothers in Trouble* places the blame for the 'trouble' in the house on the men's exploitation of the sex-gender economy, rather than on Mary's attempt to resist this exploitation. The film holds the men themselves accountable for the death and destruction their attempts to regain patriarchal authority have caused.

Abdullah Hussein and Udayan Prasad first met in Hussein's store in

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[4]Prasad's choices about what elements of the story to stress may be explained, in part, by the different audience he is addressing. The original version of the novella addresses mainly Urdu-speaking readers in and from Pakistan in the early 1980s, and seems to address a largely male audience. These readers would have been most familiar with the ideas and customs of the migrant men in the story, and it seems reasonable to assume they would have identified with their struggle over and above those stressed by Prasad's focus. The English version of the novella came out in 1987, and is, obviously, a translation of the original story for English-speaking readers. Although I cannot say for sure, it seems the perspective is not radically different in terms of its racial or gender politics. I say this because it seems likely that the anti-Semitism and anti-white sentiment that are retained in the English version of the story could have easily been jettisoned by a translator attempting to make the story of the migrant's struggle appeal to an English-speaking 'Western' audience.

The film, produced fourteen years after the original Urdu publication, and produced by the BBC, targets a contemporary English-speaking British and North American audience of mixed cultural heritage. Like Prasad himself, many of these viewers may be the sons and daughters of first-generation immigrants, and familiar with both the struggles their parents had, and with race and gender politics in Britain. Along with white British and North American viewers, these viewers would be sensitized to racial politics, especially the pro- and anti-Muslim politics played out during the Rushdie affair, and to the stereotype of Muslim men as hyper-misogynist in comparison to white British men. And the film's audience would be acquainted with contemporary feminist ideas of equality between men and women, and with the tensions between common law and customary practices.

Clapham (London) in the 1980s. Prasad was curious when he noticed that Hussein was "always scribbling," and he asked the shopkeeper what he was writing (Jaggi). Prasad's inquiry led to his realization that he was being served, in Maya Jaggi's words, by "the world's greatest living Urdu novelist." The meeting of the two men led to the production of Prasad's first feature film, *Brothers in Trouble*. The film is shot from the subjective view of Amir, a character identical to the narrator of "The Journey Back." It uses somber lighting and narrow slit vision to stress the exile status of the men, conveying a sense of the fear and confinement that the men feel as they live as 'illegals' in England. The film retains much of the novella's representation of how the men form community through reference to customary practice, and to Mary's role as a mediator between the men and the world outside the house. But in contrast to the novel, the film shows the men socializing between floors prior to Mary's arrival, suggesting that Mary does not intentionally mediate relations between men in the house. Instead, through a number of other differences in plot and characterization, and through the use of key images, *Brothers in Trouble* clearly reveals that the mediating role Mary plays between the men is one of their own making, and that their exploitation of Mary as a fetish-object is both self-destructive and harmful to everyone in the household.

One of the ways *Brothers in Trouble* emphasizes Mary's role as fetish-object is through her representation as a vulnerable outsider to English culture who becomes a victim of relations between men. While the narrator of "The Journey Back" claims that Mary eventually gains "full control over everything" in

the household (123), the film suggests that blaming women for sabotaging relations between men is a misogynist strategy that overlooks the real causes of conflict between men. It does this by emphasizing Mary's vulnerability in a number of ways. First of all, while Mary is English in the novella, she is Irish in the film, a nationality that aligns her more closely with the men in terms of her status as a victim of colonization. Secondly, the film emphasizes her status as a working class woman who lives in poverty, and who has a history of familial abuse.

Another way Mary's vulnerability is emphasized is through the characterization of Husain Shah as a sinister, corrupt and secretive man. Evidence of this is Amir's realization that Husain Shah is stealing food from Sakib,[5] who is presented, as in the novella, as the youngest, most naïve and idealistic of all the men in the house. Amir also discovers that the Pakistani agents who extort money from the men under threat of reporting them to white authorities give Husain Shah a percentage of what they collect from the migrants in the house. And while the novella suggests that Irshad's payments to his uncle are given out of a proper "sense of obligation a nephew ought to feel toward his uncle" (112), the film challenges this customary practice by representing it a legitimate point of conflict between uncle and nephew.

Mary's role as fetish-object is emphasized through imagery that uses lighting techniques and metaphors of illumination to produce meaning. The

[5]The filmmakers use a different spelling than the translator of the novella.

somber lighting that stresses the exile status of the men gives way to brighter lighting when Mary, played by blonde, blue-eyed actress Angeline Ball, arrives in the house. She is often shot in front of one of the only windows that let sunlight into the house, suggesting that she signifies as dreamlike vision of beauty in the eyes of the men. In one scene, she is represented as the proverbial woman-on-a-pedestal when she brings light to the house by replacing burned out light bulbs with new ones. In this scene, she stands on a chair, surrounded by a dozen or so of the migrant men while she screws in a light bulb. She points to the various light switches, and as someone flicks them on she says: "ta daa!," and three new bulbs light up the top floor. By presenting her as the one who brings light to the house, the film suggests that she plays a big role in the men's ability to come out of the 'darkness' of exile and 'enlighten' them in the ways of the English world.

Bergner, citing Irigaray, argues that the value of women in the sex-gender economy "lies not in their use but in their possession" (Bergner 81): "*Woman . . . has value only in that she can be exchanged*" (Irigaray 176). This idea of women as valuable only in terms of their ability to be exchanged is suggested in the film through a series of shots that represent Sakib's obsession with Mary as an exchange of one symbol of femininity for another. When we first get a glimpse of Sakib's tiny attic room, there is only one picture on the wall. It is a drawing of the head of a dark-haired, fair-skinned woman in a sari, who resembles the stars of the Urdu and Punjabi films the men see on Sundays. After Sakib becomes infatuated with Mary, he puts a photograph of a blonde movie star beside the image of the South Asian star. Then finally, after he has become completely

obsessed with Mary, he is shown removing the picture of the South Asian woman from his wall; only the photograph of the blonde movie-star remains. By signifying Sakib's growing romantic obsession with Mary as an exchange of the South Asian female fetish-object with a Western one, the film further emphasizes the function of Mary as a fetish-object for the men. This particular technique also undermines the notion of cross-cultural masculine practices as oppositional by demonstrating how women function as fetish-objects in the construction of homosocial community and masculine subjectivity in both common law and customary practice.

As I argue above, the narrator of "The Journey Back" characterizes Sakib's obsession with Mary as a movement away from the homosocial community of the household and Pakistani culture, and towards English culture. As a symbol of common law and English culture, Mary functions symbolically to produce meaning about Sakib's movement away from Pakistani masculine practices. His romantic desire for Mary is represented as cultural alienation, which leads to his abandonment of the homosocial community and customary practices that regulate the exchange of women between men. And this is what leads to his 'mental incompetence' and eventual deportation. Instead of suggesting that Mary is the cause of Sakib's alienation, as the novella does, *Brothers in Trouble* exposes how the representation of Sakib's alienation relies on and reinforces the concept of women as fetish-objects. In other words, by showing Sakib replacing one picture with another, one symbol-of-woman with another, the film shows that Sakib's obsession with Mary is a manifestation of

the sex-gender economy of both cultures that subjugates women in order to mediate relations between men. And while the replacement of the South Asian female fetish-object with an English female fetish-object indicates Sakib's alienation from the homosocial migrant culture, the exchange of images on his wall reveals that this meaning is produced by his participation in the discursive economy that constructs women as abstractions.

Ultimately, the film suggests that while Sakib's obsession with Mary moves him further away from the men and customary practice, it is only possible because of already existing gender relations in both cultures: gender relations which reproduce women as abstractions, only valuable in their capacity to be possessed. In the film, Sakib's insanity is caused not simply because he is alienated from Pakistani masculine practices, as the novel stresses, but also because his desire to possess Mary makes him an active participant in the exploitative sex-gender economy already operating between Husain Shah and Irshad. When Sakib begins to show signs of his obsession with Mary, Amir warns him to stay away from Mary because "it is between uncle and nephew," and Sakib is "an outsider" who is "not their flesh and blood." He also tells Sakib: "We're all little people here. Every line you cross increases danger to all of us." Amir refers not only to the crossing of racial lines, which determine the circulation of women among white and black men in the colonial context (Berger 81), but also to the crossing of familial lines, which determine relations between men through the circulation of women in the customary practices the migrants use to negotiate relationships between each other.

Placing emphasis on Mary's own recognition of, and objection to, being treated as an object of exchange between men is another way the film critiques the exploitation of women. When she tells Amir that Husain Shah has asked her to marry his nephew she characterizes the situation as an exchange of flesh when she asks rhetorically: "What am I? Just a piece of white meat?" In another scene, Irshad, Husain Shah, Amir and Sakib go to the pub with Mary, and Husain Shah and Irshad argue over who Mary belongs to. In response to Husain Shah's claim: "Mary is my woman. Final!," Irshad says: "Legally, she's mine." Mary's angry response challenges both claims to ownership: "I don't belong to anybody, right?" Although she wishes to extricate her self from the system that allows her to be treated as an object of exchange between men, she has nowhere else to go but the street with her newborn baby, so she submits to the abuse of Husain Shah as the men struggle over who has the right to possess her.

Husain Shah construes Irshad's challenge to his ownership over Mary as disrespect of customary practice, and when they return home from the pub he laments: "back home your age and the ties of your blood meant something. ... Now we have just these [hands], just these and the money they bring. Nothing else. No respect. Nothing." Irshad replies by telling him angrily: "If you want respect here you bloody well got to earn it." In response to Irshad's challenge to his patriarchal authority, which gives him his masculine certainty, Husain Shah responds with deadly violence, grabbing the kitchen knife and cutting Irshad across the cheek, and a long struggle ensues. At the end of the struggle Husain

Shah has been stabbed by Irshad, and lies dying at the feet of Sakib, who stands there stunned, feebly kicking and slapping the body. Mary grabs her baby and runs, while the rest of the men in the house frantically grab their belongings and bolt from the house. Amir will not leave without Sakib, who continues to kick Husain Shah's dead body despondently while Amir dials the police.

In this version of the story, Husain Shah dies, but Irshad survives, suggesting that Irshad's ability to re-adjust his masculine practices will destroy relations grounded in customary practice, but will enable his survival in England. In contrast, Husain Shah's customary masculine practices and the patriarchal order they establish will not survive in England without modification. Furthermore, by having only Husain Shah die at the end, the film suggests that his willingness to exploit others–including Mary, Sakib, and the other migrants in the house–for his own personal gains, has led to his demise. The 'brothers' are in 'trouble, the film suggests, because of exploitation based on race, gender, nationality, and the masculine practices that establish hierarchies amongst men. The migrants are exploited by British employers and South Asian agents, Mary is exploited by the men, and everyone is exploited by Husain Shah, who has been unable to adapt his masculine practices and re-inhabit his body in this new location.

In one of the final scenes Mary and Amir run into each other at a bus terminal years after the incident, and Amir lets Mary know that he blames her for the way things turned out. Sakib has been in an asylum for years, but is flying home to Pakistan that day, and Amir says accusingly to Mary: "He still thinks you're going to go to London with him one day." In reply, Mary tells Amir a story

meant to educate him about the sex-gender economy. It is similar to a passage from the novella, but is modified in the film in order to stress that Mary functioned for the men as an abstraction, and was therefore not to blame for their actions:

> Let me tell you something Amir. I have a brother . . . when I was a little girl, someone would come to the house and my dad would say, 'come on son, show us how high you can kick the ball.' He'd give the ball a bloody good belt and up and up it would go and everyone would hoot in amazement. But all I'd have to do was show off in a pretty dress. Oh, how nice. Hasn't she got lovely hair.' I never had to *do* anything, just be there. Do you understand?

Just as when she was a child, Mary does not have to *'do* anything' for men to treat her as a fetish-object; she just needs to be present. Amir acknowledges his participation in this dynamic when he tells Mary: "I'm sorry." Mary further emphasizes her point by taking off her sunglasses and revealing the black eye her current live-in lover has given her. She tells Amir: "I guess I never could pick the winners." Mary's acknowledgment that she chooses men who alleviate their masculine uncertainty by physically dominating women shows her role in the dynamic of abuse, but the scene does not read as an attempt to blame the victim. Rather, we remember that when Mary did attempt to assert agency she was blamed for the chaos that was actually created by, and between, the men. It also suggests that both Husain Shah and her current lover represent extreme examples of the masculine practice of enforcing the sex-gender economy through physical violence. Men who participate in the sex-gender economy that treats women as abstractions all participate in abuse, the film suggests, and this abuse is often played out in the form of physical violence on the bodies of real women and men.

At the end of the movie, Amir has acknowledged how the men's treatment of Mary has damaged her, and how it caused 'trouble' between the 'brothers' in the house. After he has seen Sakib off to Pakistan, he is shown walking playfully in an open meadow on a beautiful day, signifying his new-found freedom to walk about without fear in England. And we know that just as the day is sunny, Amir's future is bright. Amir has achieved the migrant's dream: he has a good job, he is buying a house, and he is finally bringing his wife and children from Pakistan. Also, he need no longer hide from white authorities. Unlike Husain Shah and Sakib, Amir has 'made it' in England. He has apologized to Mary for considering her responsible for the violence that ended their lives together and his ability to adapt customary masculine practices to this new location is crucial to his ability to thrive in England.

The film implies that it is not interracial mixing or the tension between common law and customary practice that will hinder the male migrants' ability to thrive. Rather, it is the exploitation of women as fetish-objects and the reliance on patriarchal domination over both women and other men that destroys relations between the male migrants, and hinders their ability to re-inhabit their bodies in this new location. Read in the context of Fanon's caution against interracial relationships, which he suggests should be avoided until such a time as the black man's "psychic drives [are] basically freed of unconscious conflicts" (*BSWM* 41-42), *Brothers in Trouble* proposes that racial inequality is only one part of the story. Another interior limit of decolonization, it suggests, is the exploitation of women as fetish-objects through which black men constitute

relations with each other. In order to 'succeed,' the film contends, male migrants must not only survive exploitation based on racial discrimination, but they must also acknowledge and relinquish their participation in the sex-gender economy that allows them to gain masculine certainty through the exploitation of women.

Chapter Three

Clashing Ideologies/Clashing Masculinities: Interracial Marriage and Inter-Generational Conflict in *East is East*

> *We are embattled in the war between the cultural imperatives of Western liberalism, and the fundamentalist interpretations of Islam, both of which seem to claim an abstract and universal authority.* (Homi Bhabha speaking for 'Black Voices in Defense of Salman Rushdie', *The Rushdie File*, italics in original 139).

> We are in desperate need of an Islamic Reformation that sweeps away the crazed conservatism and backwardness of the fundamentalists but, more than that, opens up the world of Islam to new ideas which are seen to be more advanced than what is currently on offer from the West. (Tariq Ali 312-13)

East is East (1999), a film version of Ayub Khan-Din's play of the same title, earned more than seven million pounds at the box office in the year of its release, and qualified as one of the top-grossing films in Britain that year (Desai 50). Like *Brothers in Trouble, East is East* critiques the enforcement of customary masculine practices as a method of establishing masculine certainty for South Asian men in Britain. And similar to *The Buddha of Suburbia*, it posits hybridity as a challenge to the demand for purity by exposing the ambivalence inherent in the binary systems that differentiate between subjects in terms of race, gender, sexuality, nation and religion. However, unlike either *Brothers in Trouble* or *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *East is East* ultimately reinstates the binary logic that constructs the East and the West as fundamentally oppositional and irreconcilable, as well as continuously embattled. This reinstatement of the East and West as oppositional is articulated as a difference in sexual politics which may, in fact, account for what Jigna Desai calls the film's 'crossover appeal': that

is, its popularity amongst white mainstream audiences.[1]

The film's ability to appeal to white audiences, Desai argues, is largely due to the "feminist challenges" it poses to "patriarchal power" and "gender normativities within the family" (Desai 67). She says it accomplishes this feminist critique by representing George Khan, who plays the "'traditional' Muslim father," as "restrictive and abusive in regard to his liberal and progressive children and wife" (67). And, she writes, it gains empathy from white liberal viewers for British South Asians who desire assimilation into Britishness by reinforcing stereotypes of Muslim men as violent fundamentalists (Desai 67). Although Desai does not stress this point, her claim about the function of feminism in the film suggests that it is largely utilitarian, i.e., that the "feminist challenges" the film poses are a means of gaining empathy for young British South Asians who want to "assimilate." Focusing on the question of whether or not the film poses substantial, rather than simply utilitarian, feminist challenges to patriarchal power, in my view, can help us get to the complex politics at work in *East is East*.

It is my contention that while the film does present a complex critique of 'traditional' Muslim patriarchal practices, it advances this critique, paradoxically, by reiterating a misogynist discourse of women as fetish-objects in the war between cultural imperatives. Although the film contains a critique of both "the cultural imperatives of Western liberalism, and the fundamentalist interpretations

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[1]Desai argues that in relation to discussion of black British cultural productions, the term 'crossover' is usually used to signify a work's success in terms of its appeal to white audiences, rather than to both black *and* white audiences.

of Islam" (Bhabha 139), its use of the body of the Muslim woman as "the site of struggle between the proponents and opponents of modernity" (Moghissi 20) signals its failure, in the end, to sustain a uniform critique of these two ideologies, or a substantial challenge to the phallic economy of patriarchy upheld by both. In spite of my objection to where the film's politics seem to end up, its ability to wage a critique of both cultural imperatives throughout much of the film is instructive. My analysis is an attempt to make clear where and how the film fails to sustain its simultaneous critique of cultural imperatives so we can learn from both its strengths and flaws.

Desai's supposition that a large part of the appeal to a crossover audience lies in the film's reinforcement of the stereotype of the Muslim patriarch presupposes that most people enjoy films that do not challenge their deeply held beliefs. It also implies that the stereotype of the Muslim patriarch is one that reinforces the cultural imperatives of Western liberalism, and thus does not undermine the world view of a white mainstream audience. While there are obviously differences amongst white viewers, and we cannot assume that all of us hold the same ideological views based on what racial category we are assigned to, or identify with, I agree, in general, with these presuppositions. However, I would like to complicate Desai's emphasis on the film's reinforcement of the stereotype by bringing in a footnote from her own text and suggest that while the film can be read as reinforcing the stereotype, it also provides viewers with the opportunity to read beyond the stereotype by providing important contextual background for George's behavior. The film's contextualization of

George's violence undermines, to a certain extent, the stereotype of the violent Muslim patriarch, provides the film's main critique of the cultural imperatives of Western liberalism by suggesting that the new racism in Britain is the primary reason George turns to violence as a way of controlling his family.

Desai stresses that because the psychological and physical abuse George metes out on his family "is associated most frequently with traditional discourses on gender and sexuality," (i.e., enforcement of male/female gender roles and heteronormativity through patriarchal dominance), George's behavior is "naturalized" (67). I would add to Desai's observations that because George's wife, Ella, is a white British woman, his violence also evokes the stereotype of the 'dark rapist' of colonial discourse, contributing to the 'naturalization' of his violence and supplying even more representational weight to the stereotype. But while Desai remains focused on the idea that the stereotype is reinforced by "naturalizing" the Muslim patriarch's behavior, she indicates, in a footnote, that his "deployment of tradition as a method of patriarchal control" is also, simultaneously, contextualized "within specific historical, geopolitical, and socioeconomic discourses." These discourses include: "the father's displacement from the Pakistani community for his exogamous marriage," and "his increasing patriotism toward Pakistan during the Indo-Pakistani war" (67, fn 25, 235-36). This point, I contend, is extremely important if we are to understand how the film wages a simultaneous critique of British Islamic notions of religious and cultural purity and the liberal British state's logic of national and racial purity. For it is through its complex representation of George's masculinity as deeply affected by

British racism, and by the expectations of the Pakistani Muslim community, that his violence against his family is contextualized. Like the violence that erupts in "The Journey Back" and *Brothers in Trouble*, George's violence against Ella and his children is a result of the South Asian man's inability to contain the ambivalence produced by the dynamics of differentiation that function to enforce cultural and religious purity.

Any analysis of *East is East* that hopes to unravel the complexities of the cultural politics of the film would also do well to heed Pnina Werbner's call to read contemporary South Asian cultural products not only for how they address racism and issues of migration (which are the two topics most often taken up by critics of these texts), but also for how they address conflicts within the South Asian diaspora itself. Werbner articulates this internal conflict by first distinguishing between two diasporic public spheres in Britain: the "British Islamic" public sphere and the "British south Asian" public sphere. The British Islamic sphere has been generated, she writes, by the call for diaspora Muslims in Britain to respond to a series of international political crises, including "the Rushdie affair, the Gulf War and, more recently, September 11, the war in Afghanistan, the confrontation between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, and the war with Iraq" (898). This sphere constitutes what the mainstream media portray as the voice for 'the East' in the ideological clash between Western liberal ideology and Islamic fundamentalism. It functions, writes Werbner, as the site where "the encounter between diaspora Muslims and the West" is "dramatised" as "highly conflictual," as both sides "grapple with apparently

intractable issues" (898). The British Islamic public sphere gives voice to mainly male community leaders, especially Pakistani Muslim religious leaders who tend "to enunciate a discourse of religious purity in which popular culture–music, dance and expression of sensuality–is rejected as sinful and 'Hindu'" (898). This discourse of purity also circulates via radical Islamic groups to young British Muslims, and is aimed against British society at large, especially British youth culture, which is characterized as "sinful, sexually promiscuous and hedonistic, and hence strictly taboo" (898-99).

The British South Asian public sphere, posits Werbner, is produced and distributed via the entertainment industry. In her account, the "new wave of South Asian novels, films, TV shows and plays, created by Muslim, Sikh and Hindu diasporic intellectuals in Britain" (899), articulates, to a wider British public, "[t]he clash between Muslim Puritanism and South Asian popular cultural 'fun'" (900). By telling stories of "cultural hybridity and cosmopolitanism, of inter-generational conflict, inter-ethnic or inter-racial marriage, family politics and excesses of consumption" (898), this second sphere launches a criticism against the British Islamic sphere and its "sexually conservative or ethnically chauvinistic values" (901). These works satirize "the parochialism and conservatism of the South Asian immigrant generation" by positing a discourse of hybridity and impurity against the British Islamic discourse of religious and cultural purity (898). The British South Asian public sphere espouses a politics of "pragmatic integration," she writes, against the "oppositional, exclusionary politics" articulated in the British Islamic sphere (900).

In addition to addressing the internal conflicts of diaspora South Asians in Britain, notes Werbner, this new wave of cultural products also take aim at the racist conditions under which South Asians live in Britain. However, despite the attention the new wave artists pay to racism, writes Werbner, "the 'real' audience targeted by the diasporic intellectuals who create these films and satirical shows is their parents and peers" (901). It is worth quoting her argument at length here:

> The intentional hybridities of the new wave South Asian novelists and film makers are clearly driven, in my opinion, not so much by a sense of diasporic marginality *vis-à-vis* the English public, but by the desire to resist and shock an authoritarian migrant South Asian older generation and induct it into the new realities of diasporic life. Their cultural politics thus needs to be read as part of a highly conflictual internal argument with and within the South Asian diaspora itself; a dissenting discourse that has as its mission to persuade a younger generation of British South Asians to be less compliant and submissive to their parents than they currently are. In this politics of the family the message is often assimilatory: to become more anglicised, liberal and individualistic. Mainstream textual readings which focus on the dramatic representations of racism and migration in some of the films and novels . . . fail, in my view, to identify their inner compulsion: to construct and then debunk and exorcise images of the almost mythical power of an older generation, guardians of the family and its sanctity. (903)

As Werbner sees it, then, mainstream analyzes of these works, which focus mainly on how these artists represent racism and migration, fail to identify the works' "inner compulsion" to expose the power of the older generation as mythical to a younger generation of British South Asians. She also suggests that representations of hybridity do not necessarily, or automatically, pose a challenge to the racist imperative for a pure white British subject: especially if the resistance to the conservatism of the older generation is articulated in terms of embracing the values, language and politics of mainstream British culture.

Those who present a message of assimilation imply that the liberal state provides an escape from the authoritarian structure represented by the British Islamic sphere. Yet conceiving of the liberal secular state as a tenable alternative to the authoritarian structures of an older generation of South Asians suggests that it does not itself constitute a fundamentalism that demands purity on its own terms. As Tariq Ali argues, both 'the East' and 'the West' compete through discourses and practices that articulate "religious fundamentalism" and "imperial fundamentalism" respectively (ix). Contemporary forms of Islamic fundamentalism are a misguided and doomed reaction to Western neo-imperialism, Ali writes, which has its own ideological roots in "neo-liberal fundamentalism" (288). And as Amy Elizabeth Ansell argues, "race and racism are not pre-modern phenomena, existing somehow outside of the mainstream of liberalism as a strange residue of irrational prejudice. Rather, race and racism are constituent parts of liberal democracy, even modernity itself" (11).[2] Thus, a substantial challenge to the racist conditions under which South Asians live in Britain must take aim at the very structure of the liberal secular state, critiquing its imperatives of racial, cultural and religious purity as severely and consistently as it criticizes the cultural imperatives espoused by the British Islamic sphere.

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[2] In "The Third Space," Homi Bhabha elaborates on the concept of this ideological tension when he points out that "at the very moment of the birth of democracy and modernity," the West operated as "a despotic power, a colonial power." This repressed history of the West, he writes, has yet to be "adequately written." However, the "material legacy of this repressed history is inscribed in the return of post-colonial peoples. . . . [T]hey - as a people who have been recipients of a colonial cultural experience - displace some of the great metropolitan narratives of progress and law and order, and question the authority and authenticity of those narratives [of the 'Enlightenment']" ("The Third Space" 218).

The challenge for artists who wish to construct a work that simultaneously critiques both the authoritarian older generation and the liberal secular state is one that goes beyond a hybridity designed to simply resist and shock; it requires a deeply committed politics of subversion that tackles the discourse of purity in all its forms. Otherwise, the diasporic politics articulated in these works can easily remain stuck in the binary logic of purity, reinforcing racist stereotypes while privileging liberal cultural imperatives.

In *East is East*, the position of constant embattlement precipitated by the seemingly "implacable antagonisms"[3] between East and West constitutes the discursive background against which the internal argument within the South Asian diaspora takes place. The internal argument is staged through inter-generational conflict between a South Asian father and his biracial British-raised sons over the issue of arranged marriage within the Pakistani Muslim community versus interracial marriage. While the father himself married a white British woman, with whom he has six sons and one daughter, he demands that his sons marry within the British Pakistani Muslim community. The film's narrative centers around the tension cause by the conflict between father and sons over the

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[3]I take this term from Homi Bhabha who, during the Rushdie affair, argued that the war between cultural imperatives was presented as an "implacable antagonism" which was, he argues, "continually rehearsed in the media": "On the one hand there is the liberal opposition to book burning and banning based on the important belief in the freedom of expression and the right to publish and be damned–and emphatically not to be comdemned [sic] to death. On the other side, there exists what has been identified as a Muslim fundamentalist position" (139). As Bhabha contends, the discourse of "implacable antagonism" reduced the "complex vision" of literature and humanity articulated in Rushdie's novel "to empty symbols: symbols that at the same time are the prisoners of a Western liberal conscience and hostages to an Islamic fundamentalist orthodoxy" (139).

patriarch's insistence on non-exogamous marriage. And the ensuing drama reveals a myriad of underlying contradictions and complexities that sometimes challenge and other times reinforce the racial and sexual binaries that underwrite the authority of both Western liberalism and fundamentalist interpretations of Islam.

When the Twain *Do* Meet: Implacable Antagonisms in *East is East*

The first line of Rudyard Kipling's *The Ballad of East and West–Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet* (1889)–is regularly taken out of context to reinforce the imperialist idea that 'the East' and 'the West' are diametrically-opposed cultures that will never be able to reconcile their differences. In his investigation of this persistent misreading, and the controversy surrounding the poem throughout the twentieth-century, J.K. Buda argues that the "qualifying couplet" that follows the first two lines is a direct refutation of the idea that the differences between East and West constitute implacable antagonisms:

> Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
> Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgement Seat;
> But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
> When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!

Buda concludes that the challenge the poem poses to the idea expressed in the first line has been overshadowed by the popularity of the notion that East and West will never 'meet' on ideological terms. Although this concept is refuted by

the rest of the poem, it expresses an idea that was embraced by many, and is continually recited to promote the idea of implacable antagonisms. As discussed above, this idea still holds great ideological sway, and requires those who are caught between clashing cultural imperatives to endlessly negotiate this ideological terrain as they struggle to form diasporic identities in contemporary Britain.

Ayub Khan-Din's use of Kipling's phrase for both his play and the feature film of *East is East* evokes this imperialist concept of implacable antagonisms between East and West, setting the stage for the clash of competing cultural imperatives that form the narrative background to the film. The phrase also signifies ironically to indicate, as Kipling's ballad portrays, that "the twain" *do* meet, and that these meetings result in attempts to negotiate the cultural and ideological differences that are, according to the 'clash of civilizations' discourse,[4]

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[4]In 1993, Samuel Huntington sparked a global controversy with his article, "The Clash of Civilizations." In it he contends that contemporary antagonisms between "the West" and "non-Western civilizations" are grounded in "real" and "basic" cultural differences, and that "[t]he fault lines between civilizations are replacing the political and ideological boundaries of the Cold War as the flash points for crisis and bloodshed" (Huntington). Against Huntington's hypothesis, Tariq Ali and Edward Said argue that the view of clashing civilizations is an ideological construct that stems from a desire to turn cultural differences into implacable antagonisms. Ali refutes Huntington's claims about "real" and "basic" differences between "'the West and the Rest'" by noting that Western governments, particularly the U.S. and UK have, in fact, demonstrated their ideological similarities with "reactionary elements" in the Middle East through their frequent support of "hardline religious fundamentalists" when it is in their political and economic interest to do so (273, 275). And he discredits Huntington's claim that religion is "'perhaps *the* central force that motivates and mobilises people'" when he argues that "the world of Islam" is not "monolithic," and that "[t]he social and cultural differences between Senegalese, Chinese, Indonesian, Arab and South Asian Muslims are far greater than the similarities they share with non-Muslim members of the same nationality" (273-74). He concludes that Huntington's argument is a "simple but politically convenient analysis [that] provided an extremely useful cover for policy-makers and ideologues in Washington and elsewhere" (273). Like Ali, Said understands the 'clash of civilizations' hypothesis as "a way of exaggerating and making intractable various political or economic problems" ("The Clash of Definitions" 571).

insurmountable. In Khan-Din's film, not only do the "twain meet," but they also marry and sexually reproduce in post-WWII England. George and Ella Khan and their seven children live in working-class Salford, Manchester in the early 1970s. The interracial marriage between George and Ella Khan produces 'hybridity' in the form of 'mixed-race' children, most of whom embrace British culture and reject their father's attempts to get them to embrace Islam and Pakistani cultural practices. The struggle between the cultural imperatives of East and West in the film is staged as a struggle against George's plans to have two of his sons, Tariq and Abdul, marry two women from a Pakistani Muslim household.

As I have already suggested, the film wages a simultaneous critique of the liberal British state's logic of national and racial purity, and British Islamic notions of religious and cultural purity, by showing how George's violent attempts to enforce Muslim 'tradition' on the family are not a natural or intrinsic aspect of South Asian immigrant culture. Rather, they are an extreme reaction to his feelings of powerlessness, which are precipitated by his inability to achieve patriarchal authority in either the Pakistani Muslim community or racist Britain. And while the film provides a feminist challenge to patriarchal Muslim authority, it does so, I argue, at the cost of reinforcing the discursive use of Muslim women's bodies as the ultimate signifiers of Muslim traditionalism and purity.

The opening shot of the film establishes the timeline, and represents the 'meeting' of East and West as an intimate encounter between a Pakistani man and a white British woman. The shot is of a wall covered in dingy floral wallpaper on which the photograph of a man appears with the caption: "In 1937, George

Khan, a Muslim from Pakistan, came to England to find work." A photo of a woman then appears, with the further captioning: "It was there he met Ella. They fell in love and married in 1946." The order in which the photos appear, along with the text that indicates that the history of the family began with George's arrival in England and his subsequent marriage to Ella, introduces the importance of patrilineal order and patriarchal authority, as well as the themes of interracial desire and cultural hybridity. Following the opening shot, the text "twenty-five years later" appears, and leads into the first scene, which shows five of the biracial Khan children gleefully, and somewhat ironically, participating in a Christian procession. Ella frantically calls to the children that "George is back early from mosque," and they quickly detour down the back alley so he will not see them as the procession passes in front of their house, where George stands watching the parade from the sidelines.

This comically chaotic scene introduces viewers to the main conflict between George and his children, and Ella's role as intermediary in the struggle between purity and hybridity. Introducing the main conflict in a farcical scene sets the stage for ridiculing George and his beliefs throughout the film. It could also, however, be read in as a way of "subvert[ing] racist images, even as these are apparently perpetuated" since, as Werbner argues, humor is often used by young South Asian British artists to "[defuse] potential conflict and [blunt] racist stereotyping, while glossing over persistent tensions and ambivalences" (902). It seems to me that many of the humorous scenes achieve all of these effects simultaneously. These farcical scenes appear throughout the film, and are often

followed by a serious and/or violent scene that clearly reveals the result of persistent tensions and ambivalences. This back and forth movement between farcical and dramatic scenes blunts the stereotype of violent Muslim masculinity embodied by George while it simultaneously perpetuating it by representing George as a deeply stubborn and unreasonable man.

The next scene sets a serious tone by revealing the dire consequences of disobeying George's attempts to integrate his family into the Muslim community, which involve, amongst other things, regular attendance at 'Mosque school', the abstention from eating pork, and marriage within the British Pakistani Muslim community. In this scene the family is preparing for Nazir's, the eldest son's, arranged marriage, and there is a high level of tension in the household. Upstairs George is shown lovingly preparing Nazir's wedding outfit, and as he helps Nazir dress in them we see that downstairs Ella is trying to cajole her resisting children into appropriate wedding attire. They complain about their uncomfortable 'traditional dress' clothes and fight with each other, demonstrating their resistance to George's insistence on Muslim traditional marriage. When Nazir flees his wedding ceremony moments after it begins, George banishes him from the house and the family for good, and he forbids Ella and the children from ever seeing him again.

The precedent for disobeying George's patriarchal authority is thus set at the beginning of the film, and Ella and the children, as well as the audience, understand that the cost of transgressing the cultural imperatives of the Muslim 'tradition', as these traditions are determined by George and the other South

Asian Muslim men who appear in the film, is expulsion from the family and the Pakistani Muslim community. This scene also establishes George as a controlling patriarch whose motivation for enforcing Muslim 'tradition' is not simply about nostalgia for home or a deep commitment to Islam. Rather, he is motivated by his own need to be accepted as a Muslim man by the Pakistani Muslim community. George's acceptance by the other men in this community is dependent upon his ability to make his wife and children submit to Muslim 'tradition,' which he enforces using verbal intimidation, threats and physical violence.

Paying attention to how George negotiates his role as patriarch in the family in relation to the challenges various cultural imperatives pose to his masculine authority shows that his recourse to 'tradition' is strategic. As I have already mentioned, the film represents George's escalating demand for filial respect as, in part, a reaction to the historical and geopolitical context of Pakistan's loss of the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971. That George's nationalist subjectivity is intricately tied to his masculinity becomes apparent in his distress over Pakistan's loss of the war, which contributes to his feelings of powerlessness and triggers an escalation of his abusive attempts to control his family. Scenes that show George reacting to news about the Indo-Pakistani war also reveal how George's sense of masculine certainty is undermined by differing marriage practices in Pakistan and Britain.

In a scene that shows George listening to a news report about the war, we discover that he has a wife in Pakistan, and that this first wife and family live on

the border of Pakistan and Kashmir. When he tells Ella that their location means they may be in immediate danger, Ella responds aggressively: "You can piss off if you think you're bringing her over here . . . If she sets foot in this country I'm off. And I'll take the bloody kids with me." Ella's response is a reminder to George, and to the audience, that her status as a white citizen of Britain means that she has access to certain legal rights and social benefits. In contrast to the concept outlined by Fanon that black men gain access to white power through white women, Ella's response suggests that this can also work against George by showing that her racial status gives her leverage in her relationship with George. Her agency is articulated through her reminder to George that she is able to survive, socially and financially, with the children outside their marriage.

This scene also reveals that George is under pressure to negotiate the masculine imperatives of both polygamous and monogamous marriage practices simultaneously, thus fleshing out more fully the embattled position between competing cultural imperatives George occupies. He cannot fulfill his duties to both wives at once, so must concede to 'failing' in his male duties in at least one of these marriage contracts. The film, however, indicates that George fails the test of masculine duty set by both cultural imperatives. Given that he lives full-time in England, and there is no indication that he sends money to his first family, he is clearly not fulfilling his patriarchal duties to his first wife and family. And Ella's reminders that she holds legal title to both the house they live in and the chip shop they run reveals that his authority over their family is contested and precarious in relation to the laws of the masculinist British state. These multiple

challenges to George's ability to perform masculine roles prescribed by either Pakistani Muslim or British liberal cultural imperatives continually fuel his anger and feelings of powerlessness, which soon erupt in physical violence against Ella and his son Maneer, who is, ironically, the only one of his children who embraces Islam and accepts without question the 'traditions' that George attempts to enforce.

While George's marriage to Ella renders him incapable of fulfilling his masculine duties to his first wife, it is also considered the main reason he is unable to enforce Muslim practices in his household, and further undermines his status as patriarch in the eyes of the Pakistani Muslim community. This is evident in a scene where George and the Mullah discuss Nazir's flight from his wedding ceremony. George and the Mullah talk about George's dilemma in broken English as they sit together in the Mosque:

> GEORGE. Why he [Nazir] wants to do this thing to me, and bring shame on my family? I no understand. No understand. Maybe I should have taken family to Bradford long time ago. More Pakistani there, see? Not this problem.
> MULLAH. It will always be different for you . . . They're different.

While George says Nazir's rejection of the arranged marriage brings shame to his family, it is clear that his own reputation as a Muslim man in the eyes of the Pakistani community is at stake. George's assertion that his son's resistance to Muslim tradition would not be a problem if he had grown up in Bradford suggests that the children's 'differences' are culturally produced, and that their resistance would not be a problem if they were immersed in the Pakistani community. By indicating, in another scene, that Ella refuses to move to Bradford, the film also

indicates his conviction that George's interracial marriage is a problem because white British women have too much power in the household. The Mullah's response to George suggests that the interracial marriage is a problem because it has produced 'mixed-race' children, who will never fit into the Pakistani community. Despite the Mullah's contention that "[i]t will always be different" for George because his children are "different," he indicates that George and his family would be accepted into the community if he marries his sons to Pakistani Muslim women. As a result of this discussion, George plans arranged marriages for Tariq and Abdul, but keeps these plans a secret from his family.

George's desperate pursuit of masculine status in the Pakistani Muslim community is a strategic response to exclusion from the racist British state. This exclusionary discourse, against which George violently enforces 'traditional' Muslim practices on his family, is represented in the film as overt racism expressed by the Khan's white neighbor, who refers to the Khan's as "pickaninnies," and is shown throughout the film promoting Powell's campaign to expunge "[c]ommonwealth immigrants and their descendants" from British soil (Powell 1). As Gayatri Gopinath points out, George's turn to Muslim patriarchal authority as a way of escaping the negative effects of state racism should also be read in the context of the Commonwealth Immigrant Act of 1968, and the Immigration Act of 1971, which "mobilized the notion of 'patriality' as a way to distinguish between desirable (white) Commonwealth citizens and undesirable (nonwhite) commonwealth citizens" (82). Under these laws, only "those British passport-holders born in the UK, or with a father or grandfather born in the UK,

had access to special immigration rights," and thus the "'boundaries of nation became officially conceptualized in terms of familial [patriarchal] blood ties'" (Gopinath and Smith, qtd in Gopinath 82). Given this context, Gopinath says, George's evocation of patriarchal authority can be read as an attempt to "produce a form of immigrant family that is fortified against the patriarchal, racialized definition of an all-white national family of Britain put in place by anti-immigrant legislation" (83). By shoring up masculine authority in his own household, suggests Gopinath, the film represents George's insistence on 'tradition' as an attempt to overcome "the contradictions of migration and racism" (83). However, the attempt to overcome the contradictions of migration and racism by replacing the white patriarch with the South Asian patriarch simply replaces one set of patriarchal practices for another set, which the film suggests are more oppressive and illogical than those of the liberal British state.

After George's concealed plans for the arranged marriage of Tariq and Abdul to the daughters of Mr. Shah are exposed, Tariq, who throughout the film shows the most resistance to George's plans for him to marry within the Pakistani community, confronts his father. In this explosive scene between father and son, the film reveals that while George is a hypocrite, his insistence on arranged marriages for his sons is a conscious and calculated reaction to exclusion from the racist British state. Tariq confronts George, telling him: "We're all fed up with being told what to do, and where to go." In response to Tariq, George insists that a "Pakistani son always shows respect," to which Tariq replies: "Dad, I'm not Pakistani. I was born here. I speak English, not Urdu."

George explains his stance on arranged marriage as an attempt to save his biracial sons from the fate of masculine uncertainty, and the un-belonging he experiences as an immigrant to Britain. He tells Tariq that his sons will never gain acceptance within British culture because the English will never accept them as one of their own. But within Islam, he insists, they will be accepted, since Islam is a "special community" that does not discriminate between black and white men. George's claim that Islam does not discriminate is undermined both by his own discriminatory comments about the local Catholic priest, and by the insistence of the Pakistani community that only those who follow 'tradition' and marry within the community are culturally 'pure' enough to be accepted.

George's insistence that his sons marry within the community also forces him into the ambivalent position of disavowing his own interracial marriage, and thus his white wife and the mother of his children, whom he professes to care for so deeply:

> GEORGE: You want bloody English girl. They no good. They go with other men, drink alcohol, no look after.
> TARIQ: Well, if English women are so bad, why did you marry me mom?
> GEORGE (holding Tariq against the wall by the neck and pointing the knife at his throat): Bastard! I tell you no go too far with me. You do what I tell you. You understand? You understanding?
> TARIQ: I understand. I understand. (George backs down and goes back to cleaning fish). I'll do what you want. I'll get married to a Pakistani. Then you know what I'll do? I'll get married to an English woman too, just like me Dad.

George's anger and violence surface most vehemently when the ambivalence of his position is pointed out to him, a pattern also demonstrated in the final scene of family violence, which is provoked by Ella telling George: You're not interested

in those kids being happy. You just want to prove to everybody what a great man you are. Because you're ashamed of me, George, and you're ashamed of our kids."

Just as in "The Journey Back" and *Brothers in Trouble*, physical violence is represented as a method through which the Muslim patriarch attempts to contain the ambivalence opened up by the impossibility of purity. The frustration that results from the impossibility of containing this ambivalence reveals George's hypocrisy at the same time it elicits sympathy for his dilemma. It does this by showing that he suffers deeply because of his inability to reconcile his desire to 'belong' to a community and save his children from the racism he has suffered, with his children's own desires to find their own ways of fitting into English society.

Tariq's own quest for masculine belonging in England provides a direct contrast to George's. While George's rejection of interracial marriage for his sons reproduces the discourse of purity articulated by the Pakistani Muslim community, Tariq's lifestyle mimics that of an 'English lad,' and he is represented as the most assimilated to white British culture of all the Khan children still living at home. He sneaks out of the house at night to drink and dance at nightclubs, where he 'passes' as white by dressing fashionably and posing as 'Tony.' He also has a white girlfriend, Stella, who is the granddaughter of the Powell supporter across the street. And while his adoption of white British cultural practices and values signifies an uncritical allegiance to white British cultural imperatives, his transgression of racial and cultural boundaries is also, to some

degree, an implicit challenge to the racism that has caused his father to retreat to traditional Islam.

Tariq's relationship with Stella represents a transgression of both British Islamic and British liberal cultural imperatives of purity. Tariq, who 'makes out' with Stella behind his father's back, constantly demonstrates a disdain for her. This signals his use of her as a fetish-object through which he defies the boundaries of Islamic purity enforced through patriarchal authority. Stella declares her love for Tariq to her girlfriend, but disavows her connection with him in the presence of her racist grandfather for fear of being punished. Her ambivalence signifies how deeply this relationship also transgresses the cultural imperatives of the British state, and her fear of being punished for her violation of racial boundaries. Despite Tariq's assimilative tendency, his intentional crossing of cultural boundaries suggests that whether or not he buys into British cultural norms and values, the fact that he *can* assimilate undermines Powell's assertion that "the West Indian or Asian does not, by being born in England, become an Englishman" (Powell qtd in Ansell 144). Tariq's strong identification as an Englishman is at once a disavowal of his Pakistani lineage, and an assertion that challenges Powell's insistence that the "difference" between Englishmen and Black immigrants and their descendants was so great that Blacks would forever be "incompatible with the 'British' way of life" (Ansell 144).

While the film clearly represents George's adoption of 'tradition' as a response to racism, it condemns his acts of violence as not only traumatic and damaging, but also as an ineffectual form of resistance to racism, as well as a

useless method of negotiating the competing ideological imperatives of masculinity. By showing how Tariq unquestioningly embraces white British culture whilst simultaneously capitulating to George's wishes, the film also critiques Tariq's attempts at gaining masculine certainty, and suggests that his methods of resistance to the cultural imperatives of Islam are just as ineffective as George's resistance to the cultural imperatives of the liberal state. Maneer, who negotiates the clash of cultural imperatives, and his father's wrath, by meekly submitting to George's every wish, is the one who receives the worst beating from George. This suggests that his masculine position puts him in a vulnerable situation; he can defend neither himself nor his family from George's violence. And Nazir, who escaped his arranged marriage and is now running a high fashion women's shop with his gay lover, is critiqued for his inability to stand up to his father's rage. In fact, in a scene that shows Nazir and his lover hiding from George after arriving at the house to confront George, the film confirms stereotypes of queer masculinity as effeminate. Queer masculinity is represented as an ineffectual response to patriarchal oppression, indicating that the film's sexual politics comprise one of its own interior limits.

It is Abdul, who neither accepts nor rejects either white British or British Islamic cultural imperatives, who embodies a masculinity that the film seems to embrace. Unlike Tariq's assimilative masculine position, Abdul's masculinity is represented as open to constant negotiation. His refusal to drink alcohol with his white co-workers as they tar and feather one of their own during an after-work bachelor party is interpreted by them as his strict adherence to the 'purity' of

Islam. However, a scene that shows him drinking a beer alone in a pub drinking the night before he meets the woman his father intends him to marry suggests that their assumption about his commitment to Islam affords him an easy escape from the ridiculousness of white masculine initiation rites. Another instance of Abdul's conscious negotiation of cultural imperatives is his willingness to submit to an arranged marriage to satisfy both George and Tariq. He tells Tariq that instead of running away, they should all "just sit down and talk to [George]," and that what he wants is his family, and he doesn't "want anyone hurt anymore." In a suggestion that emphasizes his willingness to negotiate competing cultural imperatives he tells Tariq: "look, maybe he'll be satisfied with just one of us getting married." For Abdul, the arranged marriage versus interracial marriage conflict is not one in which he is willing to engage. Instead, he hopes to keep the family together by practicing a sort of participatory democracy, a process that involves the consideration of everyone's needs and requires compromise, commitment to process, and the recognition of a need to recognize and negotiate the binaries that split the family in violent and irreconcilable ways.

In the final scene of violence, George is choking Ella after she has pointed out that it is not she who has shamed the family, but he who is ashamed of them, and the film suggests that Abdul is replacing George as patriarch of the household. Abdul grabs George and pushes him away from Ella, putting a decisive stop to the violence by placing himself between his mother and father and yelling: "Dad, get off her. Leave her alone. You will *not* touch her again . . . It's over! Finished!" In the face of Abdul's determination, George backs down and

retreats to the fish shop, defeated. The final scene, in which Abdul visually replaces George as the head of the hybrid household, indicates an endorsement of Abdul's masculine practice, which involves a constant negotiation of competing cultural imperatives and a direct approach to patriarchal violence and oppression. After fleeing from the house, George is shown sheepishly making up with Ella in the chip shop, as the children return to normal play under the watchful and tender eyes of Abdul, who stands framed in the doorway of the family home. If, as Bhabha argues, "hybridity is precisely about the fact that when a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself, it may demand that you should translate your principles, rethink them, extend them" (Bhabha, "The Third Space" 216), then it is Abdul who negotiates the embattled terrain produced by competing cultural imperatives through an "intentional hybridity" most successfully in the film.

In its critique of Muslim masculine practices that enforce ideologies of cultural and racial purity, the film engages what has been identified by both Gopinath and Werbner as feminist challenges to patriarchal power, and to gender and sexual normativity. In her illuminating reading of Mina as the "real 'queer' character in the film," Gopinath argues that while Nazir's "homosexuality initially appears to be the most obvious site of resistance to the model of normative immigrant masculinity that George seeks to inculcate in his sons," his "exilic relation" to his family home means that the "structures of gender and sexual normativity" enforced in the home are left intact (83-84). It is in Mina's "joyous enactment of 'feminist disrespect'" that Gopinath reads the "most

powerful rebuttal" of patriarchal authority. It is a more effective form of resistance to "the phallic respect demanded by father and nation" than Nazir's "escape from the family home" (Gopinath 83), as it simultaneously signifies as a way of resisting both her father's authority and the racism of the British state.

Mina is shown throughout the film alternately bullied by George into wearing clothing appropriate to his idea of Muslim modesty and tradition, and skillfully playing football in her above-the-knee school uniform in the street. In one memorable and comic scene, she kicks the ball directly through the face of an Enoch Powell poster, breaking the window of the racist across the street and effectively signifying her contempt for the racist ideology that underwrites the immigration acts and Powell's campaign to 'repatriate' immigrants and their children. In yet another scene, Mina engages simultaneously with the courtesan genre of Bollywood films and the Disney film *Mary Poppins*. She is dressed in rubber boots and a fish-cleaning apron, lip-synching and dancing to the soundtrack of *Pakeezah*, a classic Bollywood film released in 1971, the same year in which *East is East* is set (Gopinath 64). Gopinath reads Mina's performance as "an intervention into the public cultural space of both the diaspora and the nation," and argues that "the dual nature of its address" provides a critique of two competing sets of discourses: "conventional diasporic ideology with its claims to a fortified patriarchal masculinity, and racist English nationalist discourse with its definition of Britain as an all-white, homogenous collectivity" (85).

While Mina's tomboyish resistance to gender normativity is legible to a

wide audience, the intervention represented by the dance scene remains less legible to a 'crossover audience' than it is to those within the South Asian diaspora who are privy to, and have a stake in, the internal argument within the South Asian diaspora. As outlined above, Desai sees the feminist challenges the film poses as resting on the appeal it has to a 'crossover' audience based on this audience's recognition and acceptance of the stereotype of Muslim masculinity, which is evoked to paint a picture of George as an abusive patriarch against which the film wages a feminist critique (Desai 57, 67). This form of feminist critique relies, then, on racial stereotypes to critique patriarchy, and provides only a critique of 'Eastern' patriarchal norms without touching on the ways in which 'Western' patriarchal norms, as well as the discourse of implacable antagonisms, remains in place. And Gopinath's analysis points to a feminist critique legible to readers on still another level.

However, a further look at the way feminist challenges to patriarchal norms are launched by the film points to a disturbing aspect that critics have not addressed: the film's final critique of Muslim traditionalism is made through its representation of Mrs. Shah and her two daughters, who are meant to marry Tariq and Abdul, as the ultimate signifiers of cultural backwardness and conservative traditionalism. Close to the end of the film, Mr. and Mrs. Shah, and their two farcically homely daughters–one has buck teeth, the other is 'overweight,' and they both have thick-rimmed glasses–arrive at the Khan's home for the first meeting of the two families. Mrs. Shah's comments and dress mark her as the arbiter of conservative traditionalism, and she insults Ella with

her suggestion that the Khan's house is far too small to accommodate her daughters after they are married. Although Ella has been unable to stage a successful resistance against George's imposition of Muslim 'tradition', she is able to gain a voice of resistance to Mrs. Shah's repeated references to the lower class status of the Khan's, but only after an incident in which Mrs. Shah is sexually humiliated.

In a farcical scene where art-student Salim's 'sculpture' of female genitalia has landed squarely on the lap of Mrs. Shah, and Salim has fallen between her knees in a manner that suggests he is about to perform cunnilingus on the shocked and embarrassed middle-aged woman, Mrs. Shah jumps up from her chair. It is then that Ella vocalizes her resistance to the arranged marriages most aggressively, and the film's most pointed critique of purity is made. Both Mrs. Shah and Ella clearly express intolerance of the other's marriage and family through the insults they hurl at each other. Engaging the discourse of racial purity, Mrs. Shah yells at Ella: "This is an insult to me and my family. I will never allow my daughters to marry into this Jungli family of half breeds." Matching Mrs. Shah's insult to her interracial marriage with an allusion to the scientific discourse of hybridity, often used to critique cultures that encourage marriage within one's own lineage, Ella retorts: "They may be half bred, but at least they're not friggin' inbred, like those two monstrosities." Ella then orders the Shah's out, telling them: "Piss off out of my house, and take Laurel and Hardy [the Shah daughters] with you."

So while the film's critique of the violent Muslim patriarch can be read as

posing what Desai articulates as "feminist challenges to gender normativities and patriarchal power within the family" (67), the scene with the Shah family suggests that this feminist reading is difficult to sustain once a rigorously anti-racist feminist reading is applied. The feminist politics in the film that critiques brown male violence against Ella and her children solicits empathy from a 'crossover audience' not only by reinforcing stereotypes of Muslim masculinity, but also by reinforcing notions of an implacable antagonism between cultures through the standoff between Mrs. Shah and Ella, who bear the burden of representing mutual cultural intolerance at the end of the film. And while it touches on a critique of the class politics of the Pakistani Muslim community, it does so by reinforcing the racial politics underlying the discourse of implacable antagonisms between East and West, which are reinforced through the cultural imperatives of liberalism that claim to value "cultural diversity" while actually masking "ethnocentric norms, values and interests" (Bhabha, "The Third Space" 208).

Although, the film ultimately fails, in my view, to provide a substantial or sustained critique of liberal cultural imperatives, its meaning remains open to different and conflicting interpretations. While George's character reiterates many aspects of the stereotype of the violent Muslim patriarch, it can also be read as a complex representation of his struggle to mediate his own exclusion from both the racist British state and a Muslim community demanding racial, cultural and religious purity. And while Mrs. Shah and her daughters bear the burden of representing conservative Muslim traditionalism in the end, the image of a Muslim woman with enough power to call off the marriage that her husband

and George have arranged undermines the Western stereotype of Muslim women as always only victims of Muslim men.[5] The ambivalence of the film's politics is perhaps due, in part, to its attempt simultaneously to appeal to a crossover audience and wage an internal critique of the older generation of South Asians. It is also due, I think, to the very real difficulty of living, politically, with ambivalence. Unlike *The Buddha of Suburbia*, in which Karim practices a politics of subversion that lives politically with ambivalence, *East is East* has more difficulty living with the ambivalence it exposes. Despite the suggestion that the Muslim traditionalist's call for purity is, like George, defeated by the end of the film, the binaries it re-fixes help to sustain the manichean logic underlying the ideology of competing cultural imperatives. And it is this logic that ensures that the Khan family, like non-fictitious South Asian British subjects, remains embattled in the clash between competing cultural imperatives that justify both neo-imperial violence and contemporary forms of Islamic fundamentalism.

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[5]This stereotype was constructed in colonial discourse to justify the colonization of countries with high numbers of Muslims by Western governments, and is used in contemporary neo-imperial discourse to justify a range of invasions and acts of violence against people in the Middle East. One highly significant recent example is the use of this rhetoric by George W. Bush to justify the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan in 2001. (See Ahmed, Viner, Puar and Rai, and Khattak)

Part II

Interraciality and Gender Politics Post 9-11:

The Return of the 'Dark Rapist' in Neo-Imperial Discourse

Chapter Four

Benevolent Invaders, Heroic Victims and Depraved Villains: White Femininity in Media Coverage of the Invasion of Iraq[1]

> . . . the construction of white femininity–that is, the different ideas about what it means to be a white female–can play a pivotal role in negotiating and maintaining concepts of racial and cultural difference. (Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* 4)
>
> The binarism of Western civilization and Eastern barbarism is difficult to maintain when the colonizer is an agent of torture and massacre. (Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* 6)
>
> The oppressive regimes of myth and stereotype that inform the political management of multicultural discontent are themselves fluid, mobile and highly unpredictable, constantly updating themselves in the service of the changing same. (Kobena Mercer, "Busy in the Ruins of Wretched Phantasia" 20-21)

As discussed in Part I, South Asian British cultural producers employ the motif of the interracial couple to represent and negotiate gender, racial and sexual politics in the South Asian diaspora. And while some of these texts reconfigure colonial stereotypes of brown masculinity by endorsing patriarchal and heteronormative power relations, others expose the dynamics of differentiation that reinforce racial domination, female subordination and homophobia, and constitute the interior limits of decolonization. This chapter employs the strategies developed for investigating how this interracial couple functions to construct brown masculinity and white femininity in the first three chapters to critique how this same figure operates in neo-imperialist discourse to reassert the concept of implacable antagonisms between East and West. Similar

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[1]An earlier version of this chapter is published in *(En)Gendering the War On Terror: War Stories and Camouflaged Politics*. Ed. Krista Hunt and Kim Rygiel. Hampshire, Eng.: Ashgate Press, 2006. 73-96.

to the way women bear the burden of representing implacable antagonisms in *East is East*, the figure of the Western woman, most often represented as white, was used to reassert the ideology of implacable antagonisms between East and West, and reinforce the cultural imperatives of Western liberalism, in media narratives of the invasion of Iraq.

In neo-imperialist discourse, the figure of the emancipated Western woman circulates in a variety of ways to support the imperialist violence carried out in the name of the U.S.-led war on terror. White Western women are the tacit models of female emancipation that enabled U.S. President George W. Bush to claim that the war on terror would liberate Afghan women from their 'barbaric' fundamentalist male counterparts.[2] In addition, images of white female U.S. and UK soldiers deployed in Iraq were used in the first months of the 2003 invasion as icons of female liberation to illustrate the supposed benevolence, moral superiority and progressiveness of the West. However, at the same time that white female soldiers were held up as models of female emancipation and

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[2]Jasbir K. Puar and Amit S. Rai consider the Bush Administration's sudden condemnation of the Taliban's mistreatment of women a tactic employed to justify the bombing of Afghanistan in October of 2001 (Pual and Rai 127). Indeed, the Bush Administration's condemnation does seem rather sudden, especially when we consider that as recently as May 2001, "President Bush congratulated the ruling Taliban for banning opium production and handed them a check for $43 million . . ." (Ehrenreich). Saba Gul Khattak supplies further evidence of the U.S. government's hypocrisy by noting that the Bush Administration's claims that their invasion of Afghanistan will help to liberate Afghan women from the Taliban regime omits a whole range of facts that directly implicate them in Afghan women's suffering. Khattak also asserts that the difficulties and injustices suffered by Afghan women prior to the U.S.'s claim that the bombing Afghanistan would "free Afghan women from the shackles of the Taliban," have been deeply exacerbated by the attacks and the ensuing political chaos (Khattak 18-19).

Western benevolence, they were also presented as helpless and vulnerable in the face of the perceived threat of sexual violence on the part of Arab men.[3]

These representations of the liberated-yet-vulnerable white woman in Middle-Eastern space draw on European colonial narratives of rebellious natives as sexual threats to white women to rationalize imperialist violence in the present. This figure of white femininity evokes the imperialist fantasy that white men are civilized in contrast to non-whites, and that they are superior to all women, since they are the only ones who can and will protect women against the injustices of a barbaric Arab masculinity. This fantasy helps to justify the claim that the U.S. government, a bastion of white male privilege, is the rightful arbiter and instigator of global Western-style democracy, which it claims to be initiating in Iraq. The production of U.S. Army Private Jessica Lynch as a modern-day heroine, whose alleged vulnerability at the hands of Iraqi male soldiers necessitated a dramatic 'rescue' by U.S. special forces, is a stunning example of how colonial memory and fear of the Other have been effectively evoked to rally support for Bush's war on terror.

However, the image of the liberated-yet-vulnerable white woman, personified by Lynch, shifted suddenly when reports about the abuse of

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[3]Although the colonial stereotype of the 'dark rapist' evoked in the narratives I examine is annexed most strongly to Muslim men, I have chosen to use the term 'Arab men' throughout the paper to indicate the annexation of the category Muslim to Arab in Orientalist discourse of the Middle East. In this homogenizing discourse, all Arabs are assumed to be Muslims, and all Muslims assumed to be Arabs. This discursive strategy erases the range of cultural and religious identities that compose the population of the Middle East, making it possible for those who signify as 'Arab' to automatically signify as 'Muslim', and thus be easily incorporated into the category 'dark rapist'.

prisoners at Abu Ghraib, a prison just West of Baghdad, began to surface. Fourteen months after the initial attacks on Iraq and its civilian population, and twelve months after the production of Jessica Lynch as a modern-day U.S. heroine, images that recast the meaning of the figure of white femininity in the coverage of the invasion spread throughout the globe. In early May 2004, photographs of U.S. soldiers posing with their torture victims at Abu Ghraib made the front pages of newspapers throughout the West, and their conduct became the top story in nightly newscasts for several days. The photographs of Private First Class Lynndie England, a reservist for the U.S. military, were by far the most published and written about, despite the fact that, as Richard Goldstein points out, "most of the military guards charged with abusing prisoners are men." Photographs taken at Abu Ghraib prison include Lynndie England posing with naked male Iraqi prisoners piled on top of each other, pointing at the genitalia of hooded male prisoners, and dragging an Iraqi male prisoner on a leash. After these photographs were released to the press, Lynndie England quickly became "the poster girl of American brutality" (McCade).

In the following pages, I analyze how the figure of white femininity, which signified liberation, benevolence and vulnerability at the beginning of the invasion, was turned so convincingly into a symbol of depravity, malevolence and brutality just fourteen months later. I argue that the shift in how white femininity signified during the first year of the invasion reflects a change in popular support for the U.S.-led campaign, and the increased ability to raise questions about the

legitimacy of the continuing occupation.[4] Examining how this figure was made to signify different things at different times, I demonstrate how the dynamics of differentiation, which depend on the structural interdependence of opposites (Mercer, "Busy in the Ruins" 23-26), operate to reproduce racial and gender stereotypes at the same time that their ambivalence is 'refixed', and the binaries that construct identity through the categories of race, gender, sexuality and class get reinforced.

In order to create a clearer understanding of the ideological work white femininity has been made to perform in media coverage of the invasion I focus on close readings of three different war stories about white female soldiers in Iraq. Two of the war stories I analyze were produced in the early days of the invasion, and employ the figure of white femininity to symbolize benevolence, liberation and vulnerability. The last story exploits the figure of white femininity to symbolize immorality and brutality. I begin with an examination of the photograph of a white female UK soldier that accompanies a commentary constructing the invasion of Iraq as a project of Iraqi liberation. I then move on to a discussion of the production of Jessica Lynch as a heroic victim. Lastly, I examine the construction of Lynndie England as a depraved villain in media coverage of the Abu Ghraib torture scandal. In each case I focus on how the figure of white

[4]My observations about how images of white femininity operated in coverage of the invasion of Iraq throughout this paper are a result of my own survey of mainstream Western news media sources in Britain, the U.S. and Canada over the time period discussed. I focused mainly on stories circulating in newspapers distributed nationally in these countries, and on electronic news media, but was also aware of television coverage on major networks throughout North America. My analysis does not include the narratives circulating in either tabloids or alternative (activist) media sources during the same time period.

femininity functions to engender the war on terror, revealing how it is manipulated to both camouflage a crisis in U.S. control, and conversely, to expose the Bush administration's mishandling of the conflict. I demonstrate how the government and media exploit the intersectionalities of race, gender, sexuality and class to rouse deeply established fears of the Other by evoking the image of the dark rapist, whilst simultaneously reproducing these categories as discrete and stable, and thus reinforcing hegemonic discourse and securing existing power structures.

I have chosen to concentrate closely on these three stories, two of which dominated the media for weeks, because considered in relation to each other they demonstrate the amazing ability of the government and media to adapt the figure of white femininity for diverse ideological purposes. By reproducing war stories about the threat of violence against white Western women at the hands of Arab men, and by constructing figures of white femininity as representative of U.S. values and goals, these narratives legitimize the invasion and camouflage the extensive violence perpetrated by coalition forces against Iraqi civilians. As Vron Ware argues, an examination of "how representations of femininity can also articulate racism" is crucial for a feminist politics committed to the struggle against racial as well as sexual oppression ("Purity and Danger" 149). By revealing how historical constructions of these figures are reconstructed in media representations of the invasion of Iraq, I hope to create a deeper understanding of how white femininity is mobilized to reinforce official stories and manufacture public consent for U.S. military aggression. And by reading these narratives

through the same methodological lens I used to analyze South Asian British texts in Part I, I wish also to contribute to a better understanding of how narratives that critique colonial stereotypes and current racist practices by reproducing the manichean logic that constructs racialised masculinity and femininity help to sustain the binary logic of racist discourse.

Invasion as Liberation: White Women Saving Brown Folks in Iraq

In their lead-up to 'Shock and Awe', a devastating attack on Iraq and its civilian population, U.S. President Bush, UK Prime Minister Blair employed a wide-range of discursive tools to clear the ideological ground for their attack on the country. Amongst these discursive strategies were allegations that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) they planned to use against the U.S., and that the Iraqi government was directly supporting al Qaeda. Even when it became clear that United Nations Weapons Inspectors were coming up empty-handed in their search for WMDs in Iraq, and no direct connections were made between Saddam Hussein's government and al Qaeda, Bush and his 'Coalition of the Willing' did not back down from these stories. But other discursive tactics were introduced in an effort to shift the focus, and to confuse and convince those in the West that a show of force against Iraq was not only required for security reasons, but was, in fact, a moral duty.

The story that was introduced to help justify the pre-emptive strike was an older and more familiar one than that of Iraq as a direct military or terrorist threat to the U.S. It provided an explanation for the pre-emptive strike that was more

palatable to both those skeptical of the existence of WMDs in Iraq, and to those whose anger and fear did not override their ability to make clear decisions about real and imagined terrorist threats. This was an Orientalist narrative of the heroic West liberating the barbaric East from itself: in this case, the U.S. liberating Iraq from Saddam Hussein's government. And because this narrative is at the very heart of the West's construction of itself, it is much harder for most–even those critical of racism, U.S. foreign policy and historical imperialisms–to detect and resist. The Orientalist ideology that underwrites the narrative of the West as a liberating force works at the level of image and metaphor to remind Westerners of their intellectual, moral, racial and cultural 'superiority', and to evoke a sense of moral duty. This narrative of the invasion of Iraq evoked colonial memory and feminist discourse to sell the invasion as liberation, and was disseminated by mainstream media workers who adapted older colonial stories for a contemporary audience.

One of the discursive tactics developed to sell the invasion as liberation involved the use of images of white female soldiers in Iraq. These images drew on colonial narratives of the role of white women in European imperialism to re-establish the discourse of the value of white femininity advanced during nineteenth-century colonial rule. As Jenny Sharpe argues, many nineteenth-century feminists "ground[ed] their own emancipation in the moral superiority of the British as an enlightened race engaged in raising natives into humanity" (10-11). In their attempts to negotiate for power within existing gender norms, writes Sharpe, middle-class English women "appropriate[d] the moral value of

womanhood and transform[ed] it into a female form of moral agency, which depended upon the establishment of their racial superiority over Indian women" (10-11). For feminists in the age of imperialism, argues Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the value of womanhood was transformed into moral agency through "the making of human beings." The project of "feminist individualism" required the "constitution and "interpellation" of the subject not only as individual but as 'individualist'," and this stake was "represented on two registers: childbearing and soul making":

> The first is domestic-society-through-sexual-reproduction cathected as 'companionate love'; the second is the imperialist project cathected as civil-society-through-social-mission. As the female individualist, not-quite/not-male, articulates herself in shifting relationship to what is at stake, the 'native female' as such (within discourse, as a signifier) is excluded from any share in this emerging norm. (Spivak 799)

By making a place for themselves as compassionate helpmates to white men in the colonies, middle-class white women attempted to secure their own emancipation. The moral value of womanhood in the age of imperialism depended on the discourse of racial superiority, and linked practices of heterosexuality and mothering to the civilizing mission. White women's moral agency as practice involved either reproducing the white race, or saving souls in the colonies.

As I discuss briefly in my introduction, *The Globe and Mail*, Canada's longest-running national newspaper, capitalized on the moral value of white womanhood by publishing a photograph of a white woman soldier in Iraq alongside an opinion piece representing the invasion of Iraq as a project of

liberation. The opinion piece, entitled "Keep the UN Out of Iraq," is authored by Randy Scheunemann, founder of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, and member of the Board of Directors for Project for the New American Century (Scheunemann).[5] Photojournalist Jon Mills shot the photograph for the Western Daily Press while 'embedded' in Iraq with the UK's 42 Commando Royal Marines.[6] As I also describe in my introduction, the photograph shows a blond and beaming female British soldier in full combat gear toting an assault rifle and smiling flirtatiously at an Iraqi man who is handing her a flower. Her hand rests on his as she accepts the flower. His eyes are on their hands; her eyes are on his face.[7] The caption reads: "An Iraqi man thanks a British soldier patrolling Basra yesterday: 'The UN's sordid record on Iraq may be deplorable, but it is not unique.'" In his opinion piece, Scheunemann argues that the UN should be barred from participating in the "reconstruction of Iraq" because, he says, "the armed forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom have done more to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people in 19 days than the UN has done in 19 years" (A13). The decision to merge this photo with Scheunemann's opinion piece seems

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[5]The Project for the New American Century is a powerful lobbying group whose political ideas have influenced the "National Security Strategy of the United States of America," a.k.a. 'the Bush doctrine' (Driscoll 65). In the words of William Kristol, Chairman of the Project, the PNA is 'a non-profit educational organization dedicated to a few fundamental propositions: that American leadership is good for both America and the world; that such leadership requires military strength, diplomatic energy and commitment to moral principle; and that too few political leaders today are making the case for global leadership' (Kristol)

[6]The 'embeds', as they were dubbed, ate, slept and lived with the troops, and, supposedly, had access to 'all areas of the UK fighting force.' In return, the journalists had to submit their reports and pictures 'for security vetting,' and their material was pooled with those of other media outlets (Edwards).

[7] Photograph number *415680Y at http://www.rexfeatures.com (15 May 2005).

based on its ability to portray the invasion as a project of liberation, which has much to do with the fact that the soldier in the photo is a white woman.

By using the white female soldier as a representative of the invading forces, the photograph draws on the imperialist discourse of middle-class white women as compassionate helpmates of their countrymen in order to present the U.S.-led invasion as a mission of liberation. The image of a white woman 'liberating' the natives is congruent with the history of colonial discourse that extends the moral value of bourgeois white womanhood to the civilizing mission. This meaning is encouraged by the caption to the photograph interpreting the Iraqi man's flower giving as a gesture of gratitude. Even though the woman is a member of a military force invading Iraq, the caption insists that she stands in a relationship of understanding and mutual respect with the Iraqi man. In the act of receiving a flower from an Iraqi, she embodies the ideal of middle-class white femininity: signifying non-violence, conciliation, and peacemaking. The fact that she is a twenty-first-century woman who entered Iraq as an armed combatant of the British state is mitigated by her open smile and her gentle acceptance of the flower, which show that despite her position in a traditionally male field, she signifies as 'well-bred', and remains, therefore, 'properly' feminine. Concurrently, her position as a soldier represents the West as morally progressive in terms of women's equality, since she occupies a combat position, an appointment reserved, until recently, for men in the military. Within the discursive contexts of the civilizing mission and women's equality, then, the white female British soldier in Mills' photo symbolizes the humanity and moral superiority of the invading

forces. In this way the photograph solidifies Scheunemann's claim that the incursion into Iraq by coalition forces is an act of liberation rather than occupation, and is morally justified through the narrative that the invasion is a necessary step in the process towards the liberation of the Iraqi people, and the full democratization of a previously totalitarian state.

Because Scheunemann's article attempts to construct the U.S.'s latest military attack against Iraq as a campaign of liberation of Iraqis from the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, it must cast those not part of Hussein's regime, both women and men, as victims of the powerful dictator. For this to happen, the stereotype of Arab men as hypermasculine, inherently violent terrorists–which has a long colonial history, and has intensified exponentially since the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon–must be suppressed. And it must be replaced by an image that can evoke sympathy from readers. Political Science scholar Anne Norton argues that Arab men have been constructed as enemies of women and children in narratives that conflate sexuality with violence. She writes that this image is reproduced, by the news media and in film, by constructing "the harem as a place of subjection not only for women in general, but for Western women in particular" (27). Norton also contends that, during Gulf War I, the mainstream news media produced an image of Saddam Hussein that worked to temporarily suppress the application of the stereotype of hypermasculinity to all Iraqi men in order to represent Hussein as the ultimate threat to the U.S. and its citizens. The colonial genealogy of the stereotype of Arab hypermasculinity was exploited, Norton argues, to produce an

image of Hussein as both "a figure of phallic danger" and the epitome of "imminent technological invincibility" (27). This image of Hussein as an imminent military threat has been reactivated by the current Bush administration's insistence that he held WMDs, and that he directly aided and abetted al Qaeda. And the U.S. government and media emphasis on the Iraqi dictator as a direct threat to all Iraqis–women, children and men–is reproduced in articles like Scheunemann's, which rely on this image of Hussein to convince readers that the military invasion is actually a liberation.

By encouraging readers to focus on the flower-giving gesture as a symbol of thanks, the editors of Scheunemann's story privilege the Gulf War I image of Hussein, which works to suppress, at least momentarily, the discourse of all Arab men as potential terrorists. Iraqi men are thereby presented as helpless victims in need of rescue from the West: a representational strategy usually reserved for Arab women, and a narrative that must remain in place if we are to read the invasion as liberation. But because the stereotype of Arab men as hypermasculine terrorist threats to the West is a central discursive strategy of the war on terror, its suppression is extremely difficult to maintain, and it therefore becomes legible in the very same flower-giving gesture. The giving of a flower by a man to a woman symbolizes romantic intentions in the tradition of Western heteronormativity. An image of an Arab man handing a white woman a flower insinuates interracial heterosexual desire, and thereby reintroduces, on the level of latent historical memory, the stereotype of Arab masculinity as violent and threatening.

As outlined above, middle-class female domesticity was intimately connected to the discourse of racial superiority in nineteenth-century colonial discourse. Sharpe contends that this connection was "manifested in the duty of colonial women to maintain a separation of the races." In India, as in England, writes Sharpe, "the restriction of middle-class women to the home [was] the sign of national virtue and moral superiority." But in India, the domestic sphere also became "a space of racial purity that the colonial housewife guard[ed] against contamination from the outside" (Sharpe 92). As Ann Laura Stoler writes, "[t]he gender-specific requirements for colonial living [in both the African and Asian contexts] . . . were constructed on heavily racist evaluations that pivoted on the heightened sexuality of colonized men. . . from which European women needed protection" (352).[8] In India, as outlined in my introduction, imperialist narratives that constructed Indian men, particularly Muslims, as rapists of English 'ladies', began appearing during the 1857 Indian Uprising against the British. Narratives of interracial rape cast English men as the rescuers and avengers of vulnerable white women, and justified the violence meted out against the Indian population (Sharpe 6).

In her analysis of British literary epics about the Indian Uprising of 1857, Nancy Paxton discusses how the colonial rape script of white women threatened with rape by Indian men attempted to manage "at least two main conflicting

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[8]As Stoler argues, "the rhetoric of sexual assault and the measures used to prevent it had virtually no correlation with the incidence of rape of European women by men of color. Just the contrary: there was often no evidence, ex post facto or at the time, that rapes were committed or that rape attempts were made" ("Making Empire Respectable" 353).

ideologies about 'race' in British defenses of empire in the postmutiny period." One of these ideologies proclaimed that British men and women in India were racially superior to Indians, while the other "insisted on the necessity of male domination in both the public and the private spheres, which, by definition, included Indian as well as English men": Mutiny novels which were organized around the rape of Englishwomen by Indian men . . . worked to legitimize British colonizers' moral superiority by asserting the natural lawlessness of Indian men. At the same time, these national epics of the race were designed to shore up Victorian notions of gender by assigning British women to the role of agency-less victims, countering nineteenth-century feminists' demands for women's greater political equality and social participation (Paxton 111-12).

> In both the imperial past and the neo-imperial present, narratives of white women being rescued by white men from the clutches of lascivious 'natives' justify imperialist violence by dehumanizing the enemy. Further, by constructing white women as vulnerable to a 'barbaric' masculinity from which they must be protected by Western military forces, these narratives simultaneously enforce gender inequality and counter feminist demands for equal rights.

From within the discursive history of interracial desire and the stereotype of the dark rapist, the Iraqi man's gesture in Mills' photograph registers as sexual desire, as well as sexual invasion and penetration. The suggestion of interracial desire threatens the West's sense of superiority and the fantasy of racial purity, and the insinuation of sexual invasion can be read as a metaphor of the U.S. fear of invasion by Iraq: a fear declared as the purpose for invading Iraq in the

first place.[9] No matter how discredited the fantasy of racial purity may be in academic discourse today, the continued practices of white supremacy ensure the continuous reproduction of anxiety over miscegenation. And because the stereotype of Arab masculinity conflates sexuality with violence, the suggestion of interracial desire in the photo invokes the stereotype of the dark rapist, which is, on the surface, suppressed. So while Mills' photo provides support for the fantasy that Iraqis are being liberated by benevolent U.S. and UK troops by temporarily suppressing the stereotype of Arab hypermasculinity, it simultaneously invokes the stereotype of the dark rapist because of the particular gesture Mills chose to capture (or stage). This demonstrates the "process of ambivalence" that is a central strategy of both the concept of fixity and the stereotype which, as Bhabha argues, is one of the "most significant discursive and psychical strategies of discriminatory power" ("The Other Question" 18). The implication of interracial desire in the photograph evokes the dynamics of fear and desire that operates as a key signifying strategy for inscribing Otherness, turning the 'thankful' Iraqi man into a sexual threat to the female soldier, and an invasive threat to the West, thereby legitimizing the U.S.-led invasion. The photo also turns the female soldier into a sign of white femininity's vulnerability to Arab hypermasculinity: a masculinity from which the white woman must be 'saved' by white men.

[9]See George W. Bush, "State of the Union" (2003).

Producing the Heroic Victim:
Jessica Lynch as the Vulnerable White Woman

Like the Scheunemann article in *The Globe and Mail*, the stories that circulated in the mainstream media about the capture and rescue of U.S. Private Jessica Lynch were designed to increase support for the invasion of Iraq and validate the continued presence of U.S. and UK forces. When it became clear that there was strong Iraqi resistance to the so-called liberation, the media reverted to less benevolent imperialist rhetoric, and the stereotype of Arab hypermasculinity made a spectacular comeback. In narratives of Lynch's ordeal, her heroism pivoted on her vulnerability as a white woman in the face of Arab masculinity. The trope of interracial rape was utilized by the government, and then disseminated by the media, to naturalize U.S. military violence during a moment of crisis. Sharpe's assertion that the colonial discourse of interracial rape is an inconsistent and unstable signifier that intensifies at strategic moments in the imperialist project is extremely useful for making sense of the narratives that circulated about Lynch's capture and rescue. In the European colonial context, the fear of interracial rape did not exist as long as there was "a belief that colonial structures of power [were] firmly in place" (Sharpe 2-3). But during "real or perceived crises of control" (Stoler, "Making Empire Respectable" 353), interracial rape became "a highly charged trope" that functioned to manage rebellion (Sharpe 2).[10]

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[10]In her study of how white women are represented in contemporary British print media as racialised and gendered subjects, Vron Ware also shows how "[t]he ideology of the black male as a kind of beast lusting after innocent white women erupts at significant moments in different

Scheunemann's article, published when U.S. and UK forces seemed to be in full control in Iraq, represented Iraqi men as victims in need of rescue. The Lynch story appeared when rising Iraqi resistance against the occupation became impossible for the Pentagon to either ignore or hide. This moment of crisis was managed by diverting media attention away from their loss of control by recasting Iraqi men as sexual threats to vulnerable white women. As *New York Times* journalist Frank Rich observes, there were many crises that needed managing by the U.S. at the moment the Lynch story appeared: "[U.S.] troops were being stretched thin, the coalition had mistakenly shot up a van full or Iraqi women and children, and three Marines had just been killed in the latest helicopter crash" (2.1).

Briefed by United States Central Command (CENTCOM), 24-hour news networks began reporting Lynch's 'rescue' on 1 April 2003. The event was filmed by the U.S. military on a night-vision camera and "beamed back to viewers within hours of the rescue" (Kampfner). The film featured U.S. Army Rangers and Navy Seals storming the Nassiriyan hospital where Lynch was supposedly held prisoner by Iraqi fedayeen.[11] On 2 April, unnamed "Army Officials" disclosed that Lynch had suffered "at least one gunshot wound," and that she had been shot "a number of times" ("Jessica Lynch: Media Myth-Making During the War"). On 3

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geographical locations" ("Purity and Danger" 138).

[11]The *fedayeen*, also known as *Fedayeen Saddam*, is a paramilitary force founded by Uday Hussein, Saddam's son, in 1996. The force is responsible for protecting Hussein and his government against internal threats, for enforcing night curfews, and for controlling smuggling. It operates "outside the law," and is thought to have carried out executions of the government's 'opponents.' It is also thought to be providing the main resistance to coalition forces (Lumb).

April, a front-page article in the *Washington Post*, a newspaper considered by many a mouthpiece for the Bush administration, was the first to insinuate that Lynch was raped by Iraqi soldiers. In "She Was Fighting to the Death," journalists Susan Schmidt and Vernon Loeb reported that after the "ambush" of Lynch's Company by "Iraqi forces" on 23 March near Nassiriya, Lynch "fought fiercely . . . firing her weapon until she ran out of ammunition." They quoted one "official" as saying that Lynch "was fighting to the death," and that she "did not want to be taken alive." They also reported that she was "stabbed when Iraqi forces closed in on her position" (A01).

The conventional heroic battle cry that stresses a male soldier's desire to be killed rather than taken alive takes on different connotations when placed in the mouth of a female soldier. Just as English women of the 'Indian Mutiny' narratives were hailed as heroes if they chose "death over dishonour" (Sharpe 69-73), Lynch's heroism was articulated in terms of resistance to capture and rape by Iraqi soldiers. And just as an English woman's resistance to rape and capture by Indian sepoys was considered evidence of her racial purity (Sharpe 73), Lynch's racial status also rested on this narrative of resistance. That Lynch's whiteness is crucial to her construction as vulnerable to interracial rape, and to her status as an American heroine, becomes even clearer when we remember Shoshana Johnson, an African American soldier captured during the same episode as Lynch. Johnson was a prisoner for 22 days (she was recovered 11 days after Lynch), and was shot through both legs and now walks with a limp. She was not produced by the media as an all-American heroine, her recovery

has not been covered by the media, there was no television movie made of her ordeal (as there was of Lynch's), and there was certainly no suggestion that she was raped by Iraqi soldiers. Private Lori Piestewa, a member of Lynch's convoy who "became the first American woman to die in the war, and the first Native American woman ever to die in combat on foreign soil," has also been "all but forgotten" (Davidson 66-67). The reason Piestewa was not hailed as a hero is evident in the comments of Rick Renzi, an Arizona congressman, who said that despite the fact that Piestewa "drew her weapon and fought" during the conflict in Nassiriya, the battle was "her last stand" (Davidson 72). The bizarre analogy Renzi makes between Piestewa's death in Iraq and U.S. General Custer's 'last stand' at the Battle of Little Bighorn aligns the Hopi woman with a white man who gained heroic status by killing Native Americans, while distancing her from Lynch, who was a close friend serving in the same military unit. Within the discourse of white supremacy, neither Johnson nor Piestewa could figure as all-American heroines. As 'women of colour', they do not fit into the category of femininity worth saving. Unlike Jessica Lynch, they cannot signify as vulnerable to the threat of 'interracial rape' (since the term is primarily used to signify rape of a white woman by a black or brown man), and they could never be made to stand in for the violation of the U.S. by a foreign male threat. Non-white womanhood is only significant to the 'war on terror' when it justifies neo-imperialist violence, as in Bush's claim to be liberating Afghani women from the Taliban.

Although conflicting stories about the extent to which Lynch fought and

was injured appeared within a few days of the allegedly heroic rescue, the original version of the story dominated until 15 May, when UK journalist John Kampfner's "The Truth About Jessica" was published. Kampfner characterizes the tactics used by the Pentagon's media managers as heavily influenced by Hollywood producers, and writes that Lynch's rescue is "one of the most stunning pieces of news management yet conceived." In the U.S. media, the original story was also questioned, if a little less harshly, as journalists critiqued the willingness of other journalists to accept the Pentagon's version of the story without question ("Jessica Lynch: Media Myth-Making During the War"). However, the criticism did not mitigate the impact and results of the original story; it had functioned to distract the media's attention away from the crisis in U.S. public relations that resulted from the mounting U.S. casualties and Iraqi resistance to the occupation. And its usefulness by no means ended there.

Iraqi medical staff who treated Lynch at the hospital in Nassiriya denied the Pentagon's claims that the soldier suffered from gunshot and stab wounds, and that she had been slapped around and interrogated in her hospital bed (Kampfner). And U.S. doctors reported that Lynch was suffering from "total global amnesia" (Cosby), and "has no recollection of the whole episode and probably never will" (Kampfner). Nevertheless, insinuations that she was brutally beaten and raped by Iraqi soldiers continued to proliferate. In Lynch's biography, *I Am A Soldier, Too*, written by Rick Bragg and published in November 2003, the mythical nature of the rescue narrative that was produced by the Pentagon is exposed. Yet, the biography itself contains perhaps the most blatant

speculations about Lynch's experience in print. By exploiting the discourse of interracial rape and producing Lynch as a victim of Arab hypermasculinity, Bragg rescues the image of Lynch as a heroine from those who would denounce her heroic status when the Pentagon's 'rescue' narrative was debunked.

In an ABC News interview with television journalist Diane Sawyer in November 2003, Lynch denied that she went down fighting, telling Sawyer exactly what she remembers: "When we were told to lock and load, that's when my weapon jammed . . . I did not shoot a single round . . . I went down praying to my knees. And that's the last I remember" ("Too Painful"). In the biography, Bragg exploits Lynch's inability to remember what happened to her between the time she fell to her knees during the ambush and the moment she woke up in the hospital to fabricate a lurid story about interracial rape. In a sickening display of sensationalism, Bragg invites readers to imagine how Jessica Lynch might have been raped while she was unconscious. Paul D. Colford and Corky Siemaszko, staff writers for New York Daily News, recite Bragg's fictive account of interracial rape in their own contribution to the proliferation of the racialised sexual fantasy:

> Jessica Lynch was brutally raped by her Iraqi captors. That is the shocking revelation in I am a Soldier, Too, the much-anticipated authorized biography of the former POW . . . Thankfully, she has no memory of the rape . . . The scars on Lynch's battered body and the medical records indicate she was anally raped, and [as Bragg writes], "fill in the blanks of what Jessi lived through on the morning of March 23, 2003 . . . The records do not tell us whether her captors assaulted her almost lifeless, broken body after she was lifted from the wreckage, or if they assaulted her and then broke her bones into splinters until she was almost dead" (Colford and Siemaszko).

The invitation for readers to speculate about the details of how Lynch was brutally raped by Iraqi men demonstrates a perverse desire to imagine the white woman's body as brutalized and sexually violated. As Sharpe explains, "Indian Mutiny [r]eports that stage the ravaged white female body as a public spectacle reduce English women to the vulnerability of their sex" (68). This observation is highly pertinent to the stories circulated about Jessica Lynch as a victim of rape in Iraq almost one hundred and fifty years later. Both Bragg and the authors of the article admit that Lynch has no memory of rape, but ask readers to imagine how it might have happened. But despite their invitation, they do not leave us to our own imaginative devices; instead, they immediately provide an image of vulnerable white femininity and brutal Arab masculinity that reasserts white male dominance and naturalizes military violence in Iraq.

The image of Iraqi men sodomizing a severely injured white woman was sure to provoke disgust and outrage in a U.S. public convinced their military is liberating Iraqis, as it simultaneously reduced the white female soldier to a vulnerable and objectified body. The fact that Lynch cannot supply an account of rape does not matter once this image is in the reader's mind; she has been turned into an object, a body not only raped, but also sodomized by Arab men. This image produces an emotional impact that no subsequent expressions of doubt about actual events can erase. The impact is caused, in part, by the reader's repulsion at the image of rape: both because the act itself is violent, and because the rape of a white woman signifies a violation of the U.S., which is supposedly bringing liberation and democracy to Iraq. By suggesting that Lynch

was anally raped, Colford, Siemaszko and Bragg reproduce Arab masculinity as not only sexually violent, but also 'unnatural' and 'perverse'. This representational strategy recalls jokes circulating in the U.S. after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1991 which, as Norton explains, "combined Orientalism with homophobia" and "held that Kuwait had been 'Saddamized,'" a message reinforced by President Bush (Sr.)'s frequent mispronunciation of 'Saddam' as 'Sodom.' The trope of anal rape was used during the first Gulf War to suggest that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was both "illicit" and "unnatural" (Norton 27-28). The suggestion that Lynch was sodomized works in a similar way to suggest the "illicit" and "unnatural" penetration of the U.S. by Iraqis who resist the occupation by U.S.-led forces. Hence, even as it critiques the Pentagon's exploitation of Lynch, this narrative works to legitimate the invasion by reaffirming the Bush administration's original claim that Iraq poses a direct military threat to the U.S. The trope works, then, through the manichean discourses of race, gender and heteronormativity, to resurrect the image of Arab masculinity as violent and perverse, and to reduce the female soldier to a vulnerable body that must be repossessed in a manner that reasserts the phallic power of white masculinity.

At the same time that the war stories about Lynch's capture and rescue mimic British colonial narratives by exploiting the moral value of white femininity, they simultaneously transform the constitution of the moral value of white femininity by incorporating discourse from U.S. popular culture about the 'working-class hero'. Unlike middle-class white women of the Victorian era, whose moral value was grounded in their restriction to and control over the

domestic sphere, Lynch's moral value is partially defined in terms of her working-class status and her humble and respectable goal of becoming a kindergarten teacher. Most reports of Lynch's ordeal note that she is a small-town girl from West Virginia, and that her only opportunity to get a college education was to join the Army. Many reports also represent her as a young, hyper-feminine, 'down-home' girl with simple tastes. An article in *Time*, for instance, tells readers that when Lynch was recuperating in a hospital bed in Germany she requested "pink casts for her fractured legs and arm, a new hairbrush and a menu of turkey and steamed carrots" (Morse).

By mobilizing Lynch's working-class status and focusing on her humble ambitions, the mainstream media constructed a contemporary U.S. image of white femininity worth protecting. The U.S. public now had an all-American heroine whose status increased when it became clear that the U.S. military had exploited her misfortune to improve its own reputation. An indication of the strength of Lynch's working-class feminine value can be found in the refusal of Larry Flint, publisher of *Hustler*, a well-known pornography magazine, to publish semi-nude photographs of Lynch. Flint stated that he would not publish the photos because Lynch was a "'good kid'" who had become "'a pawn of the government'" ("Heroine Abuse"), a response that indicates a desire to protect Lynch's working-class, girl-next-door reputation. Unlike the white British female soldier pictured in the Scheunemann article, and unlike the middle-class white women of the 'Indian Mutiny' narratives, Lynch's feminine moral value was constructed through the discourse of working-class heroism, which was then

purportedly violated, perversely, by Iraqi soldiers. The very conditions that make the Army the only way out of poverty for many working-class women like Jessica Lynch were successfully mobilized by the media, who constructed her heroism in terms of her vulnerability to Arab hypermasculinity. In this way, the economic conditions that make Lynch vulnerable to the violence of poverty and war are constructed as a way of life worth protecting, while the violence meted out to Iraqis is naturalized, and the U.S. public's sense of national virtue and moral superiority is reaffirmed.

The 'Anti-Jessica Lynch': Lynndie England as the Depraved Villain

The myth of U.S. national virtue and moral superiority faced a significant challenge in early May 2003, when the mainstream Western media began coverage of the torture of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib. When the story first broke, the media published photographs that had been produced and circulated by soldiers at Abu Ghraib showing dozens of U.S. and UK soldiers, mostly male, performing a wide-range of atrocities on Iraqi male prisoners. The photographs depicted soldiers urinating on prisoners; soldiers posing in front of naked prisoners piled on top of each other; a naked, hooded prisoner standing on a platform with what appeared to be wires attached to his fingers; another naked and hooded prisoner handcuffed to the bars of a cell; prisoners naked and bound to each other in a prison walkway with soldiers standing over them. And these were by no means the only photographs circulating. On 12 May, U.S.

House and Senate members attended private screening sessions on Capitol Hill, in which more than 1,600 photographs, plus video footage, showed U.S. soldiers committing the abuses described above. They also viewed images of "Iraqi corpses, military dogs menacing cowering Iraqi prisoners, Iraqi women forced to expose themselves and other sexual abuses" (Guggenheim).

Many commentators began predicting that the publication of the photographs signaled the demise of the Bush administration, and Democrats began calling for the resignation of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. At this point, the *Washington Post* published a photograph of Lynndie England that shows her holding a leash attached to a naked detainee lying on the prison floor (Freeman A1). Soon, we began seeing fewer and fewer photographs of male soldiers torturing Iraqi men, and began seeing and hearing more and more about the photographs that depicted Lynndie England sexually humiliating Iraqi male prisoners. These images were splashed on front pages of newspapers throughout North America and the UK, and Lynndie England was described as the "Anti-Jessica Lynch," "the star of the Abu Ghraib horror picture show" (Wente A25), and the "sex sadist of Baghdad" (Buncombe). Canadian journalist Margaret Wente, writing for *The Globe and Mail*, argued that the photographs of England are "perhaps the greatest propaganda victory ever handed to America's enemies," and claimed that their publication signaled the downfall of the Bush administration: "Private Lynndie England may be destined to go down in history as the nasty little girl whose antics marked the turning point of American will in Iraq, and brought down a President" (A25). In the UK's *The Independent*,

journalist Robert Fisk observed that the photograph of Lynndie England holding the leash of a naked Iraqi male prisoner had the power to damage the West's sense of its own morality: "No sadistic movie could outdo the damage of this image. In September 2001, the planes smashed into the buildings; today, Lynndie smashes to pieces our entire morality with just one tug on the leash."

These comments reveal that the photographs of England were, like the other images of white female soldiers discussed above, interpreted as a direct reflection of U.S. morality and conduct in Iraq. Unlike the images of white female soldiers that had come before, and which signified U.S. benevolence and moral righteousness, however, these images were read by many as a direct reflection of U.S. depravity, brutality and corruption. But while media commentators discussed their fears or hopes that the photographs would serve as damning evidence of the corruption of the Bush administration, and of systemic American brutality in Iraq and elsewhere, the media focus on the photographs of England actually helped the Bush administration manage yet another crisis in public relations. The publication of photographs of England shifted the focus of the story away from images that showed male U.S. soldiers torturing Iraqi men, and onto images of England sexually humiliating male prisoners. By publishing those first images of England, the *Washington Post* led the way in diverting attention away from political leaders like Rumsfeld and Bush, who escaped unscathed, as evidenced by Bush's defense of Rumsfeld throughout the scandal, and by Bush's re-election on 2 November 2004.

The Bush administration's first reaction to mounting criticism of prisoner

treatment at Abu Ghraib was to reveal the findings of an investigation of the 800th Military Police Brigade by Major General Antonio Taguba (Taguba). They claimed that the photographs reveal the presence of 'a few bad apples' in the U.S. military, rather than being a reflection of the values of the U.S. government and its citizens, or standard conduct within its military. And they assured the public that the soldiers who carried out the abuses would be appropriately punished.[12] Meanwhile, the media was busy expounding over the vast differences between Lynch and England, who both hailed from small town West Virginia, but who seemed so very different. As I argued above, the media mobilized Lynch's working-class status through reference to her humble ambitions and 'down-home' tastes, replacing the middle-class femininity of colonial narratives with an image of working-class white femininity worth protecting. In England's case, however, the press mobilized her working-class status to construct her as a depraved villain.

England's femininity was depicted as the perverted 'backwoods' and 'white trash' sort, rather than the 'down home' vulnerable variety that Lynch stood for. While the press had emphasized Lynch's physical fragility and 'feminine' tastes, they stressed England's comfort in the hypermasculine role of soldier. Although they rarely mentioned the marital status of male soldiers involved in the tortures, the press frequently mentioned the fact that England had been married

[12]In a 15 May 2004 radio address, Bush declared: "Our country has great respect for the Iraqi people, and we are determined to expose and punish the abuse of Iraqi detainees. Charges have been filed against seven soldiers, and the first trial is set to begin next week. My administration and our military are determined that such abuses never happen again. All

and divorced by the age of twenty-one, was now unmarried and pregnant, and was romantically involved with her superior, Specialist Charles Graner Jr. News stories also stressed that Graner, who appeared with England in some of the photographs, was accused by his wife of "beating her, threatening her with guns and stalking her after they separated" (Dao and Von Zielbauer A10). In the discourse of 'proper' femininity, it quickly became clear that England was an 'improper' woman, doing 'improper' things. She stood in direct opposition to both the figure of vulnerable white middle-class femininity represented by the British soldier in Mills' photograph, and to the innocent and vulnerable femininity that Lynch epitomized.

The media's preoccupation with the photographs of England sexually humiliating Iraqi male prisoners seems to have served both those who wished to deny that her actions symbolized U.S. values, and those who saw her conduct as indicative of the depravity of the U.S., equally well. Fisk's claim that the photographs of England have the power to "smash to pieces our entire morality" acknowledges the power the image of white femininity 'gone wrong' has to signify the depravity of Western culture at large. But the fact that England became "the standard-bearer for prison guards gone wild" (Berman) also made it much easier for the Bush administration to claim that the soldiers depicted in the photographs from Abu Ghraib prison in no way represent U.S. values, and that their behavior is in no way indicative of typical U.S. military conduct.

Americans know that the actions of a few do not reflect the true character of the United States Armed Forces" (Bush, "President's Radio Address," 2004).

But there is a lot more to this story. A discussion of why the photographs of Lynndie England were so ubiquitous in the press, and how they served such diverse agendas simultaneously, must take into account their erotic appeal, and how both racism and sexism contribute to their representational power. In his *Village Voice* article "Bitch Bites Man! Why Lynndie England is the Public Face of Torturegate," Richard Goldstein argues that the media focus on Lynndie England as an 'improper' woman is sexist, but that the real reason why her face "is so ubiquitous in the press" is because the acts depicted in the photographs "transform a horrible story into a source of [sexual] pleasure for viewers":

> Many acts depicted in those awful photos resonate with certain erotic fantasies. To admit that images of forced sodomy and pyramids of naked men are arousing is to understand why guards can do such things when ordered to, and then smile for the cameras. But because these fantasies clash with acceptable sexuality, they produce revulsion. The media show just enough flesh to rivet our attention, while blurring the holes in the prisoners' rectums as a signal of what we need to repress. But offer an image of a woman grinning at the humiliation of men and you allay any homosexual anxiety while tapping into the permissible kitten-with-a-whip fantasy. You can blame her for being unnatural even as you project yourself into her gaze. By fostering this reverie, the press helps to transform a horrible story into a source of pleasure. That's where Lynndie England comes in. She's not just the face of Torturegate; she's the dominatrix of the American dream (Goldstein).

I agree with Goldstein's suggestion that the photographs of England have become so ubiquitous because they allow viewers to enjoy certain sexual fantasies while shifting the revulsion they might feel at their own enjoyment onto a woman. But missing from these observations is how race informs the erotic appeal of the photographs; after all, they depict a white woman torturing Arab men.

Both Susan Sontag, a leading U.S. intellectual and human rights activist, and Robert Fisk, commented early on about the similarity between the Abu Ghraib photographs and the historical legacy of racism in both the U.S. and UK. Traditional practices of U.S. racial violence are evident in the kinds of torture depicted in the photographs: most chillingly, perhaps, in the photograph of the hooded Iraqi prisoner at Abu Ghraib prison standing on a platform with wires attached to his hands. Sontag compares the photographs of U.S. soldiers posing with tortured Iraqis at Abu Ghraib to those "of black victims of lynching taken between the 1880s and 1930s, which show smalltown Americans . . . grinning, beneath the naked mutilated body of a black man or woman hanging behind them from a tree." Both sets of photographs, she writes, are "souvenirs of a collective action whose participants felt perfectly justified in what they had done." Fisk also recognizes broader practices of racism in the West reflected in the photographs when he asks readers: "Why are we surprised at their racism, their brutality, their sheer callousness towards Arabs? Those American soldiers in Saddam's old prison at Abu Ghraib, those young British squaddies in Basra came - as soldiers often come - from towns and cities where race hatred has a home: Tennessee and Lancashire."

The erotic appeal of the photographs has a great deal to do with the racist fantasy of demasculation of brown and black men that has its history in both colonialism and racial slavery. Fanon's insights into how the white man's sexual pathologies and racial fears are articulated in the practice of lynching in the U.S. are certainly pertinent here. The "Negro," writes Fanon, "is viewed as a penis

symbol," and "the lynching of the Negro," particularly his castration during lynching, registers as "sexual revenge" for the white man's own inferiority complex: "We know how much of sexuality there is in all cruelties, tortures, beatings" (*BSWM* 159). The photographs, which were first circulated amongst members of the U.S. and British military, then to a larger public via the mainstream media, provided the opportunity for a wide audience to identify with the power that association to white dominance provides to a range of viewing subjects. David Marriott argues that the significance of photographs of lynchings in the U.S. in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries lay in their ability to both preserve the significance of the act itself and enable identification with the power of whiteness:

> the corporeal and perspectival disfigurement of black men . . . [this] commemorative trapping of the occasion in an image . . . [provided] the spectator with repeated acts of identification with the lynching preserved as a representational site. In the photographic portraits of lynchers adopting poses alongside their 'trophies' there is thus the spectacle within a spectacle of individual subjects absorbed in their own enjoyment and ritualistically identifying with the socially constituted white gaze. (9-10)

While many viewers of the Abu Ghraib photographs, both inside and outside the U.S., expressed horror at seeing them, the fact that there are so many of them, and that they were circulated so widely, yet had no real effect on U.S. or British power, suggests that their racist appeal was another powerful way of justifying the occupation of Iraq as well as the larger 'war on terror'. Viewers, on some level, whether consciously or subconsciously, identify with white power when they saw the images of Arab men being broken, subdued, shamed.

The fact that they are being disciplined by a white woman allows for the realization of the 'American dream' of the total demasculation and humiliation of the hypermasculinized Arab men, while white masculinity remains outside the category of 'depravity', and the white male establishment, both military and governmental, avoids blame. The pleasure a deeply racist society experiences when viewing images of a white woman grinning at the sexual humiliation of Arab men diverts attention away from the larger question of who is ultimately responsible for the abuses. It also shifts the discussion onto the problems of one 'sexually deviant' woman. In these ways the focus on England contributed to the management of yet another crisis in U.S. authority. In the fantasy world of U.S. benevolence, England is the 'anti-Jessica Lynch', the 'whore' in the conventional virgin/whore dichotomy. The fetishization of England as a 'phallic female' turned the scandal into a cautionary tale of what happens when women get too much power, while sparing white masculinity the bad press. England's own participation is also, of course, complex, and her own posing in the photographs can be read as an act that implicates her in the ritualistic identification with "the socially constituted white gaze," and with white male power herself. It also raises questions about what kinds of choices were available to female soldiers at Abu Ghraib, a question the media paid little attention to.

There is pressure on women in any male-dominated profession to prove their toughness; but the omnipresent threat of sexual assault by male peers in the military makes a woman soldier's need to prove she is as tough as the boys a matter of great urgency. A recent increase in reports of sexual assault on

female soldiers by their male colleagues in the U.S. Armed Forces suggests that deployed female U.S. soldiers suffer from sexual assaults perpetuated by their male colleagues at a much greater rate than their civilian counterparts. The Department of Defense tries to downplay this reality, even as it is pressed to deal with the issue.[13] In her Prepared Statement to the Personnel Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Christine Hansen, Executive Director of The Miles Foundation (a private, non-profit organization providing services to victims of violence in the U.S. military), reports a huge discrepancy between the statistics generated by the U.S. Department of Defense and those generated by researchers within the Veterans' Administration regarding the frequency of rape in the U.S. Military:

> According to the Department of Defense, one-sixth of one percent of deployed female servicemembers are victims of an attempted or completed rape. A survey conducted by researchers within the Veterans' Administration concluded one third of female servicemembers deployed during Desert Storm and Desert Shield were challenged by physical sexual harassment, with thirteen out of 160 respondents reporting sexual assault. The comparative analysis, conducted by the researchers, indicates that the rate was a ten fold increase above the civilian rate during the same time period (Hansen 1).

Given the abusive conditions under which women in the military must operate, conditions that would have been heightened considerably at a place like Abu Ghraib prison, it is quite possible that England negotiated this treacherous ground by blindly following orders, or by acting like 'just one of the boys'. But the

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[13]On March 4, 2004, the United States Department of Defense issued a News Release from the Pentagon that announces the establishment of "an additional toll-free telephone number" for individuals who want to contact the Department of Defense Task Force on Care for Victims of Sexual Assault. This move follows an increase in the report of sexual assaults on women in the

fact that she is not one of the boys is what made her particularly useful in the systematic humiliation of Iraqi men. It also made her a convenient scapegoat for the Bush administration, and facilitated her use as a symbol of U.S. corruption and depravity. Although the photographs of England depict her in a position of control over Iraqi men, she is

obviously performing her sadistic role for the camera, and for the person behind the camera. She represents, perhaps most vividly of the three images of white femininity I have discussed here, the way the "precarious and unstable subjectivity" of white femininity, which exists at the intersection of agency and passivity (Sharpe 11-12), can operate to promote the interests of empire in the present. And it suggests that although women are used as fetish-objects in a masculine economy of exchange, there exists a limited form of agency within this structure that enables white women the opportunity to be both complicit with and resistant to colonizing practices.

The erotic appeal of the photographs of Lynndie England torturing Iraqi male prisoners made it possible for the Bush administration to avoid responsibility, even though the existence of hundreds of images revealing a range of U.S. soldiers committing the tortures suggest that these procedures are standard practice. As Pakistani scholar Moeed Pirzada argues, the debate about whether or not the incident uncovers abuses carried out by 'a few bad apples', or is evidence of systematic abuse by the U.S. military in the Middle East, "appears

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Armed Forces by their male colleagues in Iraq and Kuwait (United States Department of Defense, 2004).

to be an in-house matter–a conflict squarely inside the American consciousness." No one, Pirzada writes, except the Americans and Europeans, were shocked by the photographs and findings of the Taguba Report: "To the Iraqis and Arabs, to the local media and to the Red Cross, [the findings were] a mere confirmation of what they already knew" (Pirzada). And while the U.S. public seemed shocked for a short time, the scandal has been dulled down in media coverage, with periodical reports of another sentence delivered in the case of an individual soldier involved in the tortures. The erotic appeal of the photographs, and the demonization of Lynndie England, shifted attention away from the Bush administration, alleviating the initial shock of the U.S. public by manipulating the dynamics of racial and sexual differentiation to ensure them that they are still on 'top' in terms of their ability to inflict sexual humiliation and violence on the Iraqi enemy.

Concluding Thoughts

Any threat liberal feminism might pose to white male supremacy through the image of the female soldier as symbol of female liberation is contained, in part, by the discourse of interracial rape. When the mainstream media, taking their cue from political and military officials, shift the focus towards the vulnerability of white Western female soldiers in the face of Arab masculinity, they tap into a popular racist and sexist fantasy and contribute to the concealment of the main threat posed to women in the U.S. military: rape by men in the U.S. military. The discourse of interracial rape of female soldiers by

Arab men also obscures the fact that Western male soldiers regularly engage in interracial rape of "the enemy's women", a tactic condoned by many wartime governments and normalized as part of the "random violence" of warfare (Enloe 135).[14] The reason media reports of Iraqi male prisoners sodomized with chemical lights by male U.S. soldiers are almost non-existent is the same reason that the sexual abuse of Iraqi female prisoners by male members of the U.S. military are kept quiet, or referred to as consensual sex:[15] the reputation of white masculinity is protected at all costs. Iraqi women are almost completely absent from the media narratives of the invasion of Iraq because the figure of Arab femininity only serves the imperialist project as a silent figure of oppression in need of rescue.

Both realities–the rape of female colleagues, and the rape of 'the enemy's women' by Western male soldiers–are obscured by the reiteration of the trope of interracial rape by Arab men, a narrative that intensifies gender and racial

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[14]Cynthia Enloe argues that "the well-worn litany of 'lootpillageandrape' implies that male soldiers rape women the way a tornado inhales barns and tractors: anything that comes in the path of warfare, it is imagined analogously, is susceptible to warfare's random violence. Men caught up in the fury of battle cannot be expected to be subject to rules of conduct, much less the fine print of memos. Grabbing a stray chicken or a stray woman–it is simply what male soldiers do as they sweep across the landscape. This portrait of battle breeds complacency. It blots out all intentionality" (135). See also Enloe's chapter "When Soldiers Rape" for her detailed analysis of "the particular conditions under which rape has been militarized," which include: "recreational rape," "national security rape," and "systematic mass rape" (108-152). For a discussion of the rape of Iraqi women by U.S. and UK soldiers in the current conflict, a topic rarely covered by mainstream media, see the following sources: (Shumway, Ridgeway, Harding).

[15]Major General Antonio M. Taguba reports an array of sexually abusive acts perpetrated on Iraqi detainees by mostly male military police personnel, including "sodomizing a detainee with a chemical light and perhaps a broom stick." Taguba suggests that the rape of an Iraqi female detainee is consensual sex in his report when he lists the following as one of the acts considered an "intentional abuse of detainees by military police personnel": "A male MP guard *having sex* with a female detainee" (Taguba, my italics).

stereotypes and reinforces white male dominance and heteronormativity. Moreover, suggestions that white female U.S. soldiers are particularly vulnerable to rape by Arab men naturalize the violence of the U.S. war machine by reiterating the familiar imperialist axiom that posits the colonial encounter as "a Manichean battle between civilization and barbarism" (Sharpe 6).

In the first year of the invasion of Iraq, the category of white femininity played a central role in negotiating and maintaining concepts of racial and cultural difference that justified the U.S.-led invasion. When it became impossible to hide the fact that U.S.-led forces are agents of torture, the figure of white femininity was deployed to maintain the binarism of Western civilization and Eastern barbarism by placing the burden of representation onto one white woman. The flexibility of the categories 'white woman' and 'Arab man' can be seen in the construction of Arab masculinity as hypermasculine, abnormal and depraved in war stories that produce Jessica Lynch as a victim of rape by Iraqi soldiers, and that construct Lynndie England herself as abnormal and depraved. The fact that both Arab masculinity and white femininity are manipulated to signify moral depravity, and that both Arab men and white women are deployed as figures that threaten the maintenance of Western imperial dominance, reveals some of the ways the mainstream Western media incessantly rescues white masculinity from demonization. The virgin/whore dichotomy contained within the category of white femininity in the West means that the white woman can signify as either victim-of-rape-in-need-of-rescue, or depraved-villain-in-need-of-reform. Both significations co-opt the category of white femininity as a way of relieving

white masculinity from the burden of signifying as anything but a just and civilizing force.

Examining how the trope of interracial rape works in these narratives brings to the surface the structural interdependence of opposites; the image of white female vulnerability is dependent on the stereotype of the 'dark rapist', and the image of hyperfeminized/demasculated Arab masculinity is dependent on the ability of white women to signify as sexually depraved villains. Identities are articulated as binary opposites, and inextricably bound together, mutually dependent because they rely on each other for their ability to signify. The dynamics of differentiation reinforce the structural interdependence of opposites in terms of race, gender and sexuality to assert the 'fixity' of racialised and gendered identities.

If left unchallenged, the figure of white femininity that articulates racism will continue to play a crucial role not only in the violence perpetuated in the name of the war on terror, but also in the ongoing practices of racial, gender, sexual and class oppression throughout the globe. And, as discussed in previous chapters, if the figure of South Asian masculinity that articulates misogyny is left unchallenged it will continue to validate practices of sexism and homophobia, maintaining the interior limits of decolonization and strengthening the manichean logic that works to maintain racial discrimination. Critiquing hegemonic power structures involves constantly exposing how this manichean logic works to reinforce all traditional power relations, and we cannot hope to abolish any form of discrimination unless we challenge every binary system used to uphold

oppressive regimes. If Bush's coalition of the willing and their supporters in the press hope to continue to camouflage their neo-imperialist agenda, they must constantly silence the plethora of voices that threaten to expose them at every turn. A persistent critique of the narratives used to maintain hegemonic power structures is one way to resist this silencing. By engaging deeply with how meaning is produced at the intersections of race, gender, class and sexuality, we can continue to develop a feminist framework that challenges both the interior limits of decolonization and the grand narratives that validate imperialist, racial, gender and sexual violence in the 'war on terror' and beyond.

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